

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

# ADVANCE

SPRING 2022

MAGAZINE



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FROM THE PRESIDENT | **SHIRLEY V. HOOGSTRA**



## Creating Space for Good Conversations

**SINCE 1998**, the CCCU has taken time every four years to convene its members for an International Forum. While we host gatherings for your key campus leaders every year, this large gathering of over 1,200 people achieves three key CCCU association goals: reaffirming and celebrating our commitment to Jesus as Lord of all; bringing together speakers and resources that can happen only because the size of the event; and reminding us all that Christian higher education is joyful and vibrant even amidst challenges and threats. I am grateful for the leadership of my predecessors who had the vision to gather Christian higher education professionals from around the world.

This year, the International Forum took on the thorniest problems facing Christian higher education. It also created a space for practitioners to share their best practices with their peers and, through their courage and innovation, encouraged others to be bold. The CCCU's endeavors are always surrounded by worship because, as Christians, we believe God is good all the time. All the time, God is good.

For this issue of *Advance*, our editorial team selected content that continues the conversations that were started at the Forum. The content from the gathering was so rich that we knew that getting it into print will serve you and your teams in numerous ways. These articles are useful for professional development on your campus teams — they are short and readable, so you could pick one a week to read, which could lead to deeper conversations. The articles are also useful for board development, as they showcase some of the topics that are trending in Christian higher education. They could also serve to jumpstart an interactive small group discussion.

Because Christ followers have less fear and more courage, one of the greatest values of Christian higher education is our ability to foster conversations on difficult topics. In fact, the National Survey of Student Engagement found that Christian college students feel that they have the most freedom to talk about the most issues. Other institutions have a sense that there is a "right" answer and that trying to present a different perspective could cause painful rejection. But our campus communities are centered on a world-changing question:



I had a great conversation with Eboo Patel, founder and president of Interfaith America (previously Interfaith Youth Core), on faith working as a bridge, not a divide at the Forum.

What does Jesus require of us? Jesus was a clear-thinking, bold, counter-cultural role model who promised to never leave us or forsake us. It is on this Christ, the solid rock, we stand.

That is why I love Christian higher education. We develop campus communities where Christian faculty and staff integrate biblical truth throughout the academic enterprise. We hold fast to the moral and spiritual formation of students while providing academic rigor. At our best, we graduate students who act for the wellbeing of the world out of a love for Jesus Christ at a cost to themselves.

And how is it that these graduates "think of others more highly than themselves" (Philippians 2:3)? It's because they've witnessed you, their campus leaders, serving with prayerful humility and deep orthodox faith. It's because they've engaged in rigorous conversations in the classroom with faculty, honing their academic skills even as they better understand how their faith can make a difference in their field.

The CCCU is committed to be a "best in class" association because we admire and respect our campuses so much. We are in this work together. 🙌

Corey Nolen



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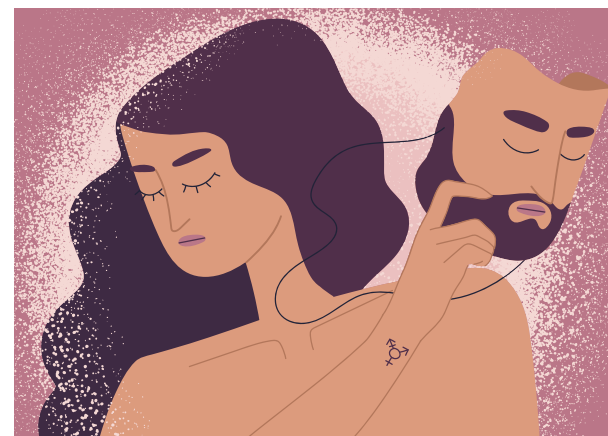
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**THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (CCCU)** is a higher education association of more than 185 Christian institutions around the world. Since 1976, the CCCU has served as the leading national voice of Christian higher education. With campuses across the globe, including more than 150 in the U.S. and Canada and more than 30 from an additional 19 countries, CCCU institutions are accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith.

**THE MISSION OF THE CCCU** is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform the lives of students by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.

### DISTRIBUTION

*Advance* is published each year in the fall and spring and is mailed to members, affiliates, and friends of the CCCU. It is also available online at [www.cccu.org/magazine](http://www.cccu.org/magazine). Direct questions and letters to the editor to [editor@cccu.org](mailto:editor@cccu.org).

### ADVERTISING

*Advance* accepts advertising from organizations that serve the students, faculty, or administration of our campuses. For more information and/or to receive a CCCU Media Kit, please email [advertising@cccu.org](mailto:advertising@cccu.org).

### PEOPLE

**Shirley V. Hoogstra**  
President

**Morgan Feddes Satre**  
Communications Specialist & Managing Editor, *Advance*

**Katryn Ferrance**  
Art and Brand Manager & Graphic Designer

**Alan Haven**  
Director of Marketing

**Natalia Valentine**  
Editorial Specialist

**Kendra Langdon Juskus**  
Copy Editor

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# Around *the* Council

## CCCU AND WHEATON COLLEGE PARTNER LAUNCH EVANGELISM COMMISSION

**THE CCCU**, in partnership with Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL), has launched a new commission focused on evangelism to help Christian colleges build thriving evangelistic campuses. Over the next several years, the commission will convene leading influencers, commission research, host events, and share best practices for preparing students to share their faith throughout their lives.

Based on research conducted with 28,000 students at more than 40 CCCU schools, the importance Christian college students place on their faith remains high. More than 69% derive their meaning and purpose from their relationship with God. Nonetheless, Christian colleges face a challenging opportunity in equipping students to share their faith. Unfortunately, 59% of students say it is only “slightly true” that they are sensitive to God’s leading in sharing their faith and supporting world mission. The Evangelism Commission will focus on helping Christian colleges address the challenges and opportunities for spreading the Christian gospel by preaching, personal witness, and other shared experience. The Wheaton College Billy Graham Center will launch the initiative with the gift of a generous donor who is providing \$330,000 in vital seed money.

**Inaugural commissioners include:**

- Dr. Allen Yeh, Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies, Biola University
- Mr. Mark Mittelberg, Executive Director, The Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics, Colorado Christian University
- Rev. Dr. Mary S. Hulst, University Pastor, Calvin University
- Rev. Dr. Angulus Wilson, University Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministries, Warner Pacific University
- Dr. Rodney Reed, Chancellor, Indiana Wesleyan University-Marion
- Dr. Greg Anderson, Graduate School Chaplain, Wheaton College (Chair)

**Advising the commission are:**

- Dr. Jerry Root, Professor of Evangelism Emeritus, Wheaton College
- Pastor Laurel Bunker, Principal Consultant, The Boncoeur Collaborative, Former Vice President, Christian Formation, Bethel University
- Mr. Samuel Chiang, Executive Director, Global Evangelism Network, World Evangelical Alliance
- Mr. Mike Whipple, Director of Strategic Partnering, Cru
- Mr. Andrew Cook, Managing Director, Wheaton College Billy Graham Center

## FOUR INSTITUTIONS JOIN THE CCCU

In February 2022, the CCCU Board of Directors approved four new members, who join the CCCU’s expansive network of more than 185 Christian colleges and universities across the globe:



Nairobi, Kenya



San Dimas, California



New Ulm, Minnesota



Collegedale, Tennessee

## CCCU LAUNCHES MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO HIGHLIGHT WORLD-CHANGING VALUE OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

**IN THE FACE** of our current social climate, younger generations need leaders with integrity and the moral courage to do what they believe is right. Christian colleges and universities have always been a cornerstone of forming these leaders, but our distinct spiritual approach is needed now more than ever.

That’s why the CCCU has launched a new initiative, “Journey to Distinction,” to highlight the unique educational experience our institutions offer. At CCCU institutions, countless individual journeys come together for a transformative time of preparation for a life of service and Gospel witness. No matter where life takes them, Christian higher education teaches students to think critically, love extraordinarily, and serve selflessly. Thus, CCCU students and alumni have traveled to every corner of the world making a difference in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

From alumni like bestselling authors and scientists to current students who aspire to become lawyers and engineers, CCCU institutions bring students’ passions and career goals together

to help them walk toward a greater sense of purpose. At JourneyToDistinction.com, we are sharing just a fraction of the stories we hear every day from all our members that inspire us and remind us why our mission is fundamental to the future of Christian leadership in the world.

Through these stories and our community outreach efforts, we want to show the world that Christian higher education offers a unique perspective that helps individuals bring hope, compassion, and change for good wherever they go. CCCU members are encouraged to visit JourneyToDistinction.com to explore the website and see how it can be an additional communications tool.



**Interested in adding stories?**  
Visit [www.journeytodistinction.com/share](http://www.journeytodistinction.com/share)

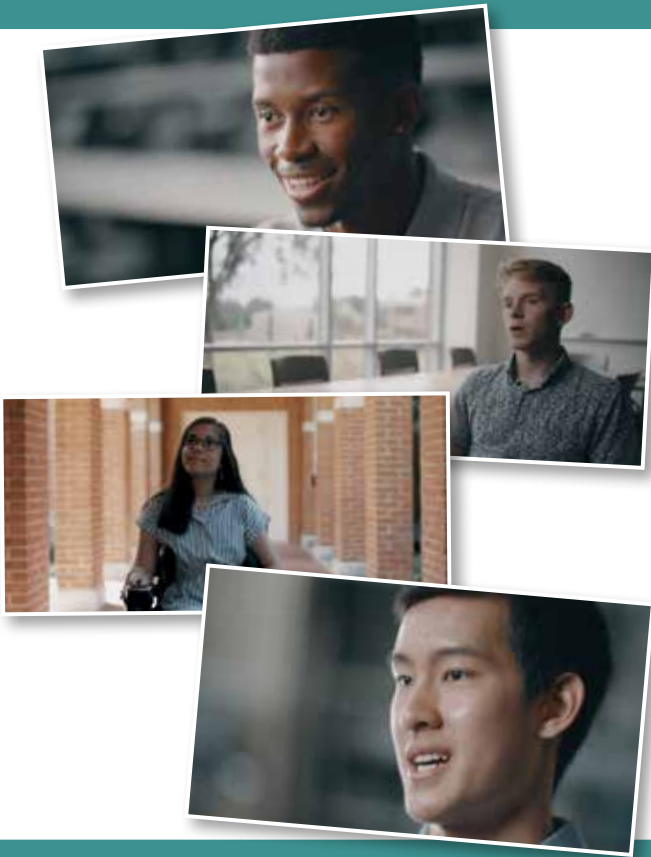
# Journey to Distinction

## Introducing the faces of Christian Higher Ed

Read and watch the inspiring stories of students at Christian colleges & universities



[www.journeytodistinction.com](http://www.journeytodistinction.com)





NOTES FROM THE FIELD: CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN ACTION By Don DeGraaf

**IN EARLY APRIL**, I was fortunate to attend a conference in Budapest, Hungary, at Károli Gáspár University (a CCCU international affiliate), entitled Building Community in Fractured Societies: Challenges for Christian Higher Education. This conference theme was timely, especially considering recent events in both Europe and North America. Sessions encouraged and called both individuals and institutions to be calming presences in their communities as they continue preparing graduates to be healers by giving them the knowledge, skills, and virtues needed to build relationships across difference and, ultimately, to be witnesses of hope of what is to come. Faculty and staff from over 30 institutions in 14 countries, including Ukraine, attended, which contributed to the impact of the conference. What a blessing it was to be together.

Prior to my time at the conference, I also had the opportunity to visit the American Studies Program (ASP) in Washington, D.C, the Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford (SCIO)

program in the United Kingdom, and the Middle East Studies Program (MESP) in Amman, Jordan. While each of these programs is unique in the opportunities they offer students, they share the common work of Christian higher education: helping students learn to be healers by listening, sharing, and humbly seeking to be calming presences in a chaotic world.

Thanks for continuing to partner with us as we provide these opportunities and partner with other member institutions to provide continued opportunities in Uganda (Uganda Studies Program), Nashville (Contemporary Music Center), and Los Angeles (LA Film Studies Center). If you have questions about our GlobalEd programs or our partner programs, please contact the GlobalEd office at [globaled@cccu.org](mailto:globaled@cccu.org).

**DON DEGRAAF** is the CCCU's senior director of educational programs.

THE LATEST UPDATES FROM CAPITOL HILL

**THE CCCU'S ADVOCACY WORK** promotes and protects CCCU members' unique position as Christ-centered, nonprofit institutions of higher education that are often in the crosshairs of a variety of issues affecting higher education and faith-based organizations, and/or challenges to religious character and convictions. In the last calendar year, the CCCU signed onto 75 letters and nine amicus briefs supporting our major advocacy issues. Other highlights of our recent advocacy work include:



**Title IX** | At time of printing (May 2022), the Department of Education is set to soon release new Title IX regulations, which are expected to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity and may change some of the current wording around the religious exemption. The CCCU encourages our members to submit comments and make their voices heard once these regulations are released.



**Section 127** | Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code allows employers to exclude from income up to \$5,250 per year in assistance provided to employees for educational courses. It was first implemented in 1978 at a maximum of \$5,000; thus, adjusting for inflation, the benefit should be somewhere between \$13,355 and \$21,380 to maintain its original purchasing power. A permanent expansion and extension of Section 127 would help employees advance their education, increase their job skills, and repay student loans. Thus, we support legislation (H.R. 4411 and H.R. 4428) introduced in the House by Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL-7) and Rep. Jason Smith (R-MO-8) that seeks that expansion.



**Hunter v. Department of Education** | Current and former students at 25 Christian colleges (including 18 CCCU members) filed this lawsuit in March 2021. It seeks to strip long-standing religious protections from Title IX and would take federal financial aid away from students who choose to attend faith-based institutions. This would restrict student choice, preventing middle- and low-income students from taking their federal aid to these institutions. CCCU institutions subscribe to a number of biblical convictions, and we believe our institutions' right to teach and instill those convictions in the next generation is protected by the First Amendment. A Preliminary Injunction hearing was held in November 2021, and the plaintiffs' attorneys filed an amendment in December to bring the total number of plaintiffs to 48 (having previously successfully added seven more plaintiffs in June). As of this writing, the CCCU is awaiting outcomes on these items, as well as on our Motion to Dismiss the case.



**Starkey v. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis et al.** | An employee at a Catholic high school entered into a same-sex marriage in violation of her contract, which expects employees to adhere to Catholic teaching on marriage. She sued the Archdiocese, arguing discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual orientation. The Archdiocese asserted numerous defenses, including the Title VII religious exemption. The court took a narrow view of the exemption by claiming that only issues arising as religious discrimination count under the religious exemption and, since Starkey claims sex and sexual orientation discrimination, Title VII does not protect the school's action to terminate her employment due to violations of church teaching. The court did find Starkey was a minister under the ministerial exception, but this narrow view of Title VII is troubling. The CCCU and several peer organizations filed a brief highlighting Title VII's protections allowing religious organizations to build communities of faith by employing those who support the mission of the organization. The case is currently on appeal to the Seventh Circuit.



**LEARN MORE**  
For more information about the CCCU's advocacy work, visit [www.cccu.org/advocacy](http://www.cccu.org/advocacy).



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CCCU EXPANDS LEADERSHIP TEAM

The CCCU has added new members to its leadership team in recent months, including:



**DR. JILL HARTNESS** as Chief Advancement Officer. She previously served as head of school at the Boyd Buchanan School, where she secured the first multi-million-dollar gift in the school’s history.

**DR. JOHN ADDLEMAN** as Chief Operations Officer and Chief of Staff. He previously served as the vice president for student experience at Bethel University (MN), where he also had experience serving as special assistant to then-president Jay Barnes.



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2022 CCCU AWARD RECIPIENTS



*Champion of Higher Education Award*

**TED MITCHELL**

Dr. Ted Mitchell is the president of American Council on Education (ACE), the major coordinating body for the nation’s colleges and universities. As leader of ACE, Mitchell has positioned the organization at the forefront of every major issue in higher education even as he helped the higher education community speak with one voice on important issues affecting all types of institutions. Mitchell has made a point to include the CCCU, as well as the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, in important conversations affecting all of higher education.



*Young Alumni Award*

**KELSI DEEL FRANCO**

Kelsi Deel Franco is a 2013 graduate of Lee University (Cleveland, TN) and the founder and executive director of The House of Cherith, a trauma-informed residential recovery program providing a safe place for adult female survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. Its mission is to empower survivors to reclaim their dignity and self-worth, renew their faith in humanity, and rekindle their passion for a lifetime of success.



*Emerging Public Intellectual Award Winner*

**AARON GRIFFITH**

Dr. Aaron Griffith, assistant professor of history at Whitworth University, was named the winner of the 2021 Emerging Public Intellectual Award for his work exploring the connection between evangelical Christianity and the American justice system. The award, hosted by Redeemer University and sponsored by the Acton Institute, Cardus, the Center for Public Justice, the CCCU, and the Henry Institute at Calvin University, recognizes and fosters emerging talent and those working in the Christian academy who excel in both academic and public spheres and whose work impacts the common good. For more on Griffith’s research, see the interview on page 42.

OTHER WINNERS

At the 2022 CCCU International Forum, there were two additional presentations of awards that had been named previously but had not yet been recognized in-person because of the pandemic. Senator Ben Sasse received the Mark O. Hatfield Leadership Award (he had been announced in 2020), and Emmanuel McNeely, a 2012 graduate of Palm Beach Atlantic University and co-founder of the Dr. M.D. Project, received the 2021 CCCU Young Alumni Award.

Photos courtesy of the subjects



# 2022 INTERNATIONAL FORUM

The 2022 CCCU International Forum marked a time of joyful reunions, thoughtful discussion, and deep learning on a broad range of important and impactful topics. With over a dozen plenary speakers and more than 80 peer-led concurrent sessions, nearly 1,100 attendees examined the faith imperatives, fundamentals, and best practices vital to the success of Christian higher education now and in the future. More photos can be found on page 48.



**1** Each day of the Forum started with worship and devotions. Worship on Friday and Saturday featured students from Dallas Baptist University. **2 + 3 + 8** Attendees had many opportunities to discuss what was being presented and catch up with colleagues from around the world. **4** Emmanuel McNeely, a graduate of Palm Beach Atlantic University and co-founder of the Dr. M.D. Project, was presented with the 2021 CCCU Young Alumni Award.



All photos by Corey Nolen



**5** Attendees listen to Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, give his plenary session. **6** Darren Campbell (right), CEO of Slingshot, and Larry Taylor, president of ACSI, on stage with CCCU President Shirley Hoogstra. **7** Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse (center right), the plenary speaker for the Friday evening gala, was presented the Mark O. Hatfield Leadership Award by CCCU President Shirley Hoogstra, Houghton College President Emerita Shirley Mullen, and Concordia University, Nebraska President Bernard Bull.



# The Redemptive Power of Truth Telling

Christian colleges and universities can lead the way in changing narratives and facing hard truths.

By Bryan Stevenson

## BRYAN STEVENSON

is the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a human rights organization in Montgomery, Alabama, as well as the best-selling author of *Just Mercy* and a professor of law at the New York University School of Law. He is also a graduate of Eastern University, a CCCU institution in St. Davids, Pennsylvania. He gave a plenary talk from the main stage of the 2022 CCCU International Forum called “American Injustice: Mercy, Humanity, and Making a Difference,” from which this essay is adapted.

I believe doing justice requires us to change narratives. Our faith actually allows us to see ourselves differently when we understand what redemption can do, what compassion can do. And our world, our community, our nation needs us to change some of the narratives that are out there. We have the highest rate of incarceration in the world because 50 years ago, we had politicians that were preaching what I call the politics of fear and anger. They said that people who are drug-addicted and drug-dependent are criminals, and we have to put them in jails and prisons. Now, they could have said that people suffering from addiction and dependency have a health problem, and we need a healthcare response to that population. But they didn't say that, and we allowed ourselves to be governed by fear and anger.

I see the resurgence of a lot of that politics of fear and anger today, and I just want to be a witness that we are called to not be led by

fear and anger. When you are governed by fear and anger, you tolerate things you should never tolerate. You accept things you should never accept. Go anywhere in the world where people are being abused or mistreated, persecuted because of their faith, denied basic services because of their ethnicity. If you go to these places and you ask the perpetrators of that violence and abuse why they do what they do, they can give you a narrative that will sound like fear and anger.

We have to challenge these narratives. We are called to be witnesses of God's hope and grace, and that is the challenge that we have to face. I've seen what the narrative of fear and anger is doing in our society, and too often, I believe our churches have been silent when we need to lift our voices. We've allowed these narratives to emerge that some people are beyond the grace of God; that some kids are not God's kids. We have got to change that narrative. We do not show our commitment

to our children by looking at how well we treat talented and privileged and gifted kids. Our commitment to children has to be expressed by how we treat poor kids, abused kids, neglected kids.

We have to change the narrative. We need to usher in an era of truth and justice; truth and reconciliation; truth and restoration. And I believe that our students and our institutions have to lead because we understand something about truth-telling and what comes after it. People are afraid, and because they're afraid, they're resistant; they're reluctant. They just don't trust what will happen if we acknowledge the problems, the histories, the harms.

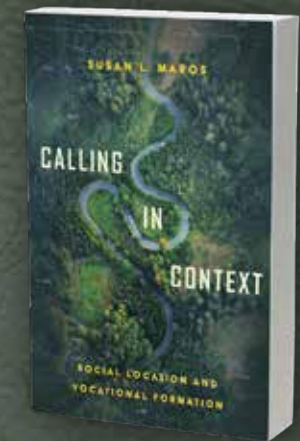
I think we have to show them is that it's all right to acknowledge wrongdoing. You can't come to church and say, “I want salvation and redemption, but I'm not going to admit to anything. I'm not going to own up to anything.” Preachers are going to tell you that it

doesn't work like that. They're going to say, “No, you have to confess and repent. And you shouldn't fear confession and repentance, because confession and repentance opens your heart. It's what allows God's grace to fill you. It's what leads you to redemption.” And our country has to have the courage to change these narratives.

I believe that when we don't do the truth telling, we deny ourselves the beauty that is God's justice, God's mercy being shown on this earth. There is power in truth telling, and I am persuaded that there is something better waiting for us in this country. I think there is something that feels more like freedom, more like equality, more like justice that we have yet to experience. But I think people of faith are going to have to lead those who are worried, who are afraid, who are nervous about changing these narratives, and that is the way we will do God's justice on this earth — by changing the narrative. 🗣️

Photo by Corey Nolen

## A NEW HORIZON IN THE CONVERSATION ON CALLING



Is the concept of calling universal? God calls all people, yes—but calling is not a monolithic concept.

This path-breaking book helps Christians in the United States see how social location shapes assumptions and experiences with vocation, critically examining the cultural priorities of vocation that emphasize certainty, career paths, and personal achievement.

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# A SHINING LIGHT IN TURBULENT TIMES

BY WALTER KIM

Christian campuses have a unique role in God's plan for the renewal of all things.

Walter Kim is president of the National Association of Evangelicals. He has spent nearly three decades preaching, writing, and engaging in collaborative leadership to connect the Bible to the significant intellectual, cultural, and social issues of the day. He gave the following talk from the main stage of the 2022 CCCU International Forum; it has been edited for length. To view the full talk, visit the CCCU's YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo](http://www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo)).



# AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS,

we live and navigate between brokenness and beauty. On our college and university campuses, we allow a bit of the eternal purpose of God to pierce the veil of our temporal moment and to draw us closer to his kingdom purposes.

I want to turn our attention to a passage that speaks to beauty in the midst of brokenness, from Isaiah 2:1-5:

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

When I became a Christian, I learned what I was saved *from* — saved from sin, saved from separation from God, from the dominion of Satan. But much of the Christian life has been a journey of learning what I've been saved *for* — what are we saved to do in this world and in the world to come? Amid chaos, we are called to participate in God's renewal of all things.

Unlike Isaiah, I am not a prophet, but I'm going to make a prophecy: I prophesy that you have either come out of, or are in, or will soon enter into a difficult time. Pretty safe prophecy. And in those difficult times, we have to fight the natural instinct for self-preservation, for vindictiveness.

Now, Isaiah lived in turbulent times. We want to say that we have lived through unprecedented years. It feels unprecedented to us, but in the scope of God's work in this world, God's people have actually faced a lot worse. Admittedly, there were moments of economic prosperity and political stability for ancient Israel, but these really were islands of peace within an ocean of chaos. And during the time of the writing of Isaiah, the Assyrian empire was terrorizing and engulfing the nations, including Israel and Judah. Judah had a front-row seat to the downward political spiral of the northern kingdom of Israel. Almost with dizzying rapidity in 2 Kings 15, we learn that Shallum had assassinated Zechariah and succeeded him as king. Then Menahem assassinated Shallum and succeeded him as king. Then Menahem lived his life, but his son [Pekahiah] was assassinated by Pekah, who in turn was assassinated by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. And we think we have encountered political turmoil!

And not only did Isaiah [and the Judeans] have a front row seat to this demise and deportation of the northern kingdom; they lived it. The southern kingdom itself experienced the wrath of the Assyrians. If you go to the British Museum in London, you can see the actual threat that Judah experienced [depicted on] massive stone reliefs recovered from the palace of Sennacherib. And that relief depicts the battering rams, the long spears, the flaming arrows — and there are soldiers impaled, naked, on long spears and hoisted up like flags of warning.

How do you respond to such chaos? Where is God in this moment? Is there any beauty in brokenness? Maybe the beauty is in the people of God. But Isaiah points out that the external chaos was matched by internal corruption. Isaiah 1 is a long prophetic litany of the public sins of [Judah]: worship without ethics that God despised; social violence; political corruption; a judicial system that was broken and did not defend the cause of the poor, the widow, the oppressed. Is there any hope?

And into these tumultuous times, God gives Isaiah a vision for the people: "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of mountains. It will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it." Isaiah lived in a generationally defining moment for the

people of God. And he received a vision that transcends the generations — a reminder of God's kingship in the midst of chaos and complexity; a vision for us in our moment.

And this is a vision of a multinational work of God that came amid war, persecution, and the existential threat of God's work in this world. ... This is a vision that defied every human instinct for self-preservation. The nations were, in fact, streaming to Israel and Jerusalem — to destroy them. And God was asking for the doors to be open? For their hostility to be responded by our hospitality? What an extraordinary call that speaks to the supernatural nature of this vision.

Notice that all nations will stream up to this mountain. Streams don't go up; they go down. The natural gravity of chaos is being combated by the supernatural work of grace. And the nations are going upstream to God. The question is: Will we participate? Will we join in God's work of renewing?

Now, we are embodied creatures. A study in *Science* magazine reported how the incidental interaction between physical objects shapes our judgment. Resumes that were put on heavier clipboards, according to this study, were judged to be more substantial. The same resume on light or heavy clipboards changed the perception. ...

So why on top of a mountain? Because it reminds us we are wired to look up to the mountain and to see transcendence, God's kingship. For this reason, the Jerusalem temple was put on top of a mountain, to be a physical and spiritual GPS system for ancient Israel. Literally, it dominated the landscape of Jerusalem. If you wanted to know where to go, [you used the Temple to find] your bearings: "Okay, there's the temple. Yeah. Make a right turn here, left turn there. And you get to Jacob's house." But it was also a spiritual GPS. It was a point of reorientation, not just physically, but theologically.

What would you discover in that [physical and theological] reorientation? What architectural journey would you take? Well, you would get to the temple, and on the outside, there was the paraphernalia of forgiveness — the great altar where the sacrifices were given — to remind us of our fundamental need of redemption and the offer of that redemption through the lamb and ultimately the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

But that was just the beginning of that theological journey. From there, you would enter into the holy area, and there on the walls, you would have images of pomegranates and palm trees and cherubim — a reminder of Eden and that the work of redemption, the forgiveness of sins, was just the beginning of the Christian journey. What we are saved *from*, and what we are saved *for*. You would then enter into the holy area [and would be reminded that] we are saved for the recreation, the redemption, the renewal of all things — between the first Eden and the ultimate Eden in the new kingdom, the new heavens and the new earth.

Then you get into the Holy of Holies in an architectural structure that was unique in the ancient world: a perfect cube, 30 feet by 30 feet by 30 feet. Why that structure? ... When you enter into a perfect cube, you lose all sense of spatial orientation; you don't know which direction is up or down. This was intentional. It was an invitation to enter into the redemptive experience of forgiveness ... and to lose ourselves in the wonder of who God is, absolutely immersed in his transcendence, mercy, and love.

What you [Christian colleges] do is so incredibly important. You have these years with students where you invite them on that journey to understand

## The ways we pursue education should be an apologetic for the ways that God would seek to redeem this world.

WALTER KIM

redemption better, to know it more deeply in a broken world, to join together in every endeavor that God would give to humanity in the redemption and renewal of all things. ...

Something Christian colleges are uniquely able to offer is the context of the great "why" of what we learn. Here is a vision not just simply of individual transformation but institutional transformation. We go up to the temple in order to go out into the world, to be agents of a wise and welcoming justice. "He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his path. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples." Of course, scripture speaks of judgment as judgment against sin, but here judgment is not judgment against sin. It's not retribution. It is restoration. It is reconciliation. The law that goes out from Zion is not just simply a bunch of rules. It includes the story of redemption, of creation, fall, and deliverance.

In Deuteronomy, we actually hear the reason that the law is given: "Keep them and





WALTER KIM

do them, for they will become your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD, our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as this law that I've set before you today?' [Deut. 4:6-8] There was actually a missional purpose for the law. The way that Israel's society was ordered was to be an enticement, a witness, an apologetic for God's presence in the world that would draw the nations to it.

The ways that we pursue education and order the Christian community should be an apologetic for the ways that God would seek to redeem this world. Is the city in which your school resides wiser because of your presence? Are your neighbors able to sense that the way your campus community is ordered is so compelling that they have something to learn from you?

And this encompasses the work of transformation in the domains of life. "He will judge between the nations and will settle their disputes. He will beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." The good news of Jesus ultimately contributes not just to personal but to public transformation as

well. The judicial system is transformed. The economic system is transformed. Plowshares and pruning hooks for an agrarian society would represent economic flourishing: The dignity of work as each family had a parcel of land given to them by God. And then there was the social cohesion, the means and manners and mentality of war dispensed.

The world longs for such beauty to pierce brokenness. James Choung, vice president of strategy and innovation at InterVarsity [Christian Fellowship], has written and given presentations on generational shifts and the impact on gospel presentations. We all have questions that we ask about life, but it seems that each generation has a gateway question, a leading question that leads to the other questions. For Boomers, the question typically is "What is true?" Hence, the Boomer generation resonated deeply with the apologetics movement. ... The Gen X'ers, my generation, our question is "What is real?" That's why every Gen X pastor has been trained to open up [sermons] with a personal illustration, because we want to establish authentic, real connection. Millennials, their question is "What is good?" And their commitment to justice — to the good — is instinctual. Gen Z'ers, those in college now and coming up, their question is, "What is beautiful?" In a world of ugly, can we find beauty? Every one of us asks all those questions, but each of us and each generation seems to have a gateway question. What does it look like to have a form of faith that sends out beautiful followers of Jesus into this world?

As the president of the National Association of Evangelicals, when I stepped into the position two years ago, I was often asked, "Are you going to fix this?" Or, "Are you going to drop the name 'evangelical'?" Or "Here's a list of complaints." I almost got to the point of saying, "Hello, I'm the president of the National Association of Evangelicals, and I'm sorry for whatever it is that you're thinking." But I don't want to give up the term "evangelical." Because just before I took up my role, I had the opportunity to be a part of a delegation to attend the World Evangelical Alliance in Jakarta, Indonesia, where 800 delegates from 90 different countries were gathered. I did not always understand every syllable that was sung or spoken, but I understood the spirit. And I joined in it. There was a panel discussion in one of the plenary sessions where representatives from Africa and Asia and Europe and South America were discussing what was going on in America. I wanted to turn my name tag over so that no one would be able to see where I was from. But as the discussion unfolded, it really resulted in a plea: "We need you as partners in this work." I had a lot to think about, and so on the bus ride back from the convention center to the hotel, I headed to the back of the bus, because I needed to find where the fun evangelicals were, and they are always at the back of the bus.

And there they were, and there was a lot of laughter. As I introduced myself to them, and they to me, I discovered that they were Palestinian followers of Jesus and Jewish Israeli followers of Jesus. Think about the complexity of that relationship. And there they were — laughing, loving, learning with each other, and seeking to live faithfully in whatever challenge God would put before them in the years to come.

I am so grateful to be a part of a global community, hundreds of millions of people faithfully following Jesus. How American it would be just to jettison the term "evangelical" because it's inconvenient to us. I want to be partners with what God is doing throughout the world. And I pray diligently that in an ocean of chaos, your campuses would be places of beauty — the mountain of the Lord, where the nations will be drawn. 🙏

Photo courtesy of Walter Kim



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DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS POSE A GREAT CHALLENGE FOR HIGHER ED — AND EVEN GREATER POTENTIAL.

BY NATHAN D. GRAW

# CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE AGILE COLLEGE

The CCCU is committed to assisting institutions in addressing and engaging the current issues of the day. At the 2022 International Forum, Nathan D. Grawe, professor of economics at Carleton College and author of *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* and *The Agile College*, gave a plenary session addressing the coming demographic changes for higher education broadly and CCCU institutions specifically. We asked him to adapt content from that session that is most relevant for CCCU institutions into an article. The most relevant data he selected is pictured throughout the article; the body includes his insights and suggestions for responding to the data.

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I RECENTLY READ A WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN WHICH THE AUTHOR REFERRED TO THE UPCOMING DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AMONG OUR STUDENT POPULATIONS AS “THE APOCALYPSE.”

I don’t like that metaphor on several levels. It doesn’t seem theologically sound, but it also isn’t practically helpful to people leading colleges and universities. If what lies ahead is the apocalypse, we should just throw in the towel, go home, and be with loved ones.

Thankfully, higher education has far more agency than this metaphor suggests. Institutions already grappling with demographic change offer ideas for proactive response. Demographic change is real, but we can adapt.

REDOUBLING ACCESS EFFORTS

As prospective student pools shrink, I expect continued urgency around the access agenda. For many of us, that means holistic admissions. While some implement this approach through test optionality, others pursue similar goals while retaining test requirements. For example, the College Board’s Landscape tool contextualizes student test scores with statistics about the student’s home community — poverty rates, education levels, home ownership rates, and the like. Community characteristics are summarized in an index capturing the degree of adversity faced by the student. When Landscape users consider students with a particular test score, their evaluation can be influenced by whether a student earned that score with all of the advantages one could imagine, or by overcoming significant adversity.



The Landscape tool has been applied productively by institutions as diverse as Wellesley College and Florida State University. When testing the tool, the latter used it in the context of admission to a summer bridge program. The admissions team was so happy with the result that they decided to reconsider applicants in their regular admissions process who faced high adversity and were slated for likely rejection. After rereading those files with the environmental context in mind, the admissions team identified more than 1,000 additional admits, resulting in 400 additional matriculations. This experience reminds us that when we incorporate greater context — however we do that — we may come to a different conclusion about whether a given student has what it takes to be successful at our institutions.

Serious efforts to expand access will require something of us. I offer an example from Drake University not because we should all follow this specific strategy, but rather because it demonstrates an important attitude. The university identified a subgroup of unserved prospective students. This group didn’t fit Drake’s four-year profile because it seemed they would have a better experience beginning with a two-year program. In response, Drake decided to expand its program offerings to include a two-year degree. I admire this decision because it shows an openness to potentially radical change — to reconsidering even the institution’s self-identity. Too often we implicitly say to students, “You need to adapt and meet us where we are at,” when instead we need to be asking, “How must we change to be ready for the next generation of our students?”

In my work as a professor, I have been thinking about these questions in the context of my own classroom. The George Floyd murder occurred just an hour from my home. So, not surprisingly, my church, like many others, prayerfully considered how God calls our body to respond. I was on our church council at the time and began studying others’ work on racial reconciliation. A sermon from the McLean Bible Church in Virginia grabbed my attention. It began with short reflections by people of color in their congregation. While they were generally positive, several congregants spoke of feeling “welcomed” with a bittersweet tone. “Welcome” implies something like, “This is your space and I’m allowed to be in it, but it isn’t my home.”

The sermon went on to unpack Psalm 133, a psalm of ascents that would have been sung when God’s people came together. Such a time of gathering would surely highlight distinctions between the tribes. The psalm begins, “Behold how good and

Corey Nolen

IMPORTANT DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES



2027

Projected year when non-Hispanic whites will become a minority among 18- to 29-year-olds

71%

Percent of post-secondary enrollees who were non-Hispanic white in 2000

54%

Percent of post-secondary enrollees who were non-Hispanic white in 2020



16.3%

Decline in births between 2007 and 2020

how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” The word “good” in this verse is apparently the same word used repeatedly in Genesis 1. God created and it was good — Eden good. The pastor underscored that what is good, according to the psalm, is when we live together in *unity*, not in *uniformity*.

The sermon convicted me and has caused me to think about my classroom and my prior aspiration to create a welcoming environment. I believe that was the wrong aspiration. While I am ultimately responsible for the classroom environment and so must take ownership on that level, my goal is that all students feel ownership over the space, free to be who God intended them to be — and that none would conclude, “That’s someone else’s class, though I’m welcome there.”

This is the shift of mentality that I see Drake grappling with: the willingness to change and even sacrifice to create a space that becomes home to somebody else.

FOCUS ON RETENTION

With a 16% decline in the number of babies being born over a short period of time, it is not realistic to expect that higher education will recruit its way out of demographic contraction. Admissions staff need to be on the top of their game, to be sure. But if our only response is to recruit harder, we’re going to come up short. We do, however, have a second lever for increasing enrollment: retention initiatives. Even partially addressing long-standing issues of student attrition would largely eliminate enrollment challenges for many campuses over the next 15 to 20 years.

Retention work takes many forms. Saint Cloud State University surveys students in the fall term of the first year. After just three weeks, they can identify students who, despite having a B average or better, will have a 20% attrition rate

into spring term due to a low sense of social belonging. By identifying at-risk students early, the university can coordinate with faculty and staff to connect with those students before it is too late.

Another example: Rutgers University creatively turned student employment into an on-ramp for academic support. They’re training supervisors in the library, gym, and student center to be mentors, conduct weekly check-ins, and make referrals to academic support as necessary.

Retention programs that engage faculty and staff across the campus will be essential to significant improvements in student success. As important as the office of enrollment management may be, it is too small to sustain progress working alone. Each faculty and staff member engages students in a variety of contexts, and each of these interactions represents an opportunity to invite those students to re-enroll or to walk away. Until all parts of the campus recognize our shared responsibility for retention and student success, we’re going to struggle.

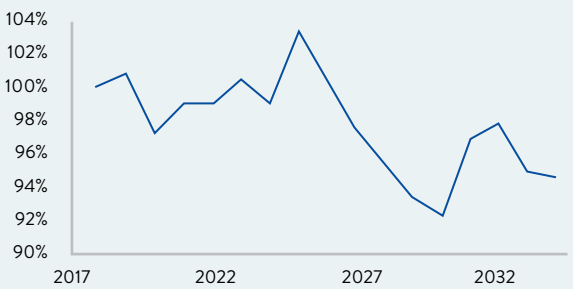
At Wheaton College in Massachusetts, former president Dennis Hanno argued that the institution could not be a national leader in liberal arts education while not retaining at least 90% of its first-year students. To communicate the shared responsibility for this outcome, the college put a bounty on the first-year retention rate: When they reach the goal, everyone on campus will get a raise.

An incentive like that articulates clearly the importance of retention, both to the financial bottom line and to the institution’s mission. To put it more personally: Every time a student walks away from my campus at Carleton, it’s a mini tragedy. I can no longer view such tragedies as an acceptable cost of doing business. For each one of those students, something really unhappy happened, and it’s my job to do what I can to keep that from happening.

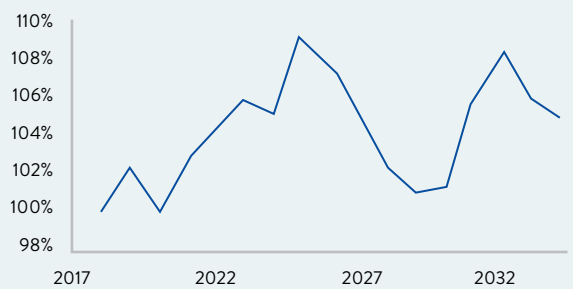


PROJECTED NUMBER OF COLLEGE-GOING STUDENTS, RELATIVE TO LEVEL IN 2018

Four-Year Institutions Not among Top 100 Colleges & Universities



Four-Year Institutions among Top 100 Colleges & Universities



Source: Author's calculations based on data from the American Community Survey (2017), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Vital Statistics Reports (2018, 67(7)), 2009 High School Longitudinal Study (restricted and unrestricted), and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (2011; 2015)

Effects of fertility decline will affect the market for traditional-aged higher education at an 18-year lag. Recent Department of Education data provides a picture of college-going rates for various demographic groups. These rates can be applied to large Census Bureau headcounts to project what might happen to future prospective student pools if college-going patterns remain the same.

After decades of a rising market, in the mid-2020s higher education might expect a significant contraction. Indeed, in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions, where fertility was low even before the Great Recession, projected prospective student pools are already in decline. While the Census data used in these projections only include births through 2016, we know that fertility has declined another 8% through 2020, so the anticipated contraction will deepen and extend through the late-2030s.

Not all institutions will experience the same contraction, however. The rising share of parents with college degrees creates an upward trend in markets for more selective institutions.

NEW CONNECTIONS INSIDE THE INSTITUTION AND BEYOND

It is difficult to believe that colleges and universities can reach new students or retain them longer without making changes to the curriculum. Sometimes this can involve synergistic use of existing courses. For example, Wheaton College in Illinois recently developed the cohort-based Aquitas Program in Urban Leadership. Research suggests that cohort programs can contribute to student success. In addition, the program's urban leadership focus may speak to new student groups and so serve recruitment goals. While the program does involve some new elements, many courses were pre-existing.

Other programs may pursue greater retention by making a stronger connection between what students are doing in their studies and life after college. Research by Gallup and Strada finds that students who see a connection between coursework and life after college are more likely to say that their educations were of high value and worth the cost. Emphasizing such relevance makes some think immediately of business and STEM fields. But I want to stress that all departments and programs can emphasize relevance. For example, Scripps College, a leader in the humanities, has developed a senior capstone experience in which humanities students address problems like environmental degradation or homelessness from a uniquely humanistic lens. The experience helps students to articulate for themselves — and later to employers — how a deep understanding of what it is to be human provides a great foundation for solving many problems we face today.

Some responses to demographic change will involve merging or partnering with another institution. The Transformational Partnerships Fund, led by SeaChange Capital Partners and the ECMC Foundation, offers grants to institutions that see a path forward involving deep collaboration. Even when a new partnership provides great benefits, transitioning to the new relationship involves costs. And institutions seeking such transformation often lack resources. A grant from the Fund can bridge this gap.

THE COVID IMPACT

Obviously, many colleges have experienced real enrollment challenges due to the pandemic. While overall enrollments were down across all sectors, the enrollment decline was even greater among first-time enrollers. The National Student Clearing House Research Center noted a 6.3% decline in first-time enrollments among students at private nonprofit four-year campuses between fall 2019 and fall 2020; public two-year institutions saw a contraction of 18.2%.

Declines were especially pronounced among first-generation and low-income students. That's not good news if we think that we're going to address falling birth rates by expanding access. Those student groups who are most marginalized in the context

of COVID are exactly the groups with whom we seek better and closer relationships. COVID has amplified the challenge.

To understand the problem COVID may have created, it's worth looking back to the experience following the Great Recession. In the years leading up to 2009, the college matriculation rate among African American high school graduates quickly converged on the national average. Higher education was making great progress on the achievement gap. And then the financial crisis hit. Unemployment went up for all groups but disproportionately affected African American households. As a result, it wasn't terribly surprising to see a downward blip in matriculation rates in that community. But today a decade of data shows that this was no blip — it was the start of a trend that reopened gaps. This experience from a decade ago is a reminder that as we face the present COVID challenge, we can't allow a temporary pandemic to produce permanent enrollment losses.

International student enrollments have also been hampered by pandemic-era restrictions. According to the Institute of International Education, from 2019–20 through 2020–21 international student enrollments fell by 16%. As dire as that number may be, this figure underestimates the pandemic's damage: In

the same year, first-time international enrollments fell by over 40%, and in-person enrollment by first time international students fell 72%. While international student enrollment numbers in fall 2020 were tough enough, the larger picture may be dimmer still as it seems likely that we'll see lower retention of this cohort due to distance education. In years to come, we will learn how the pandemic experience affected our relationship with international student communities and whether COVID limited one potential response to a weakening domestic market.

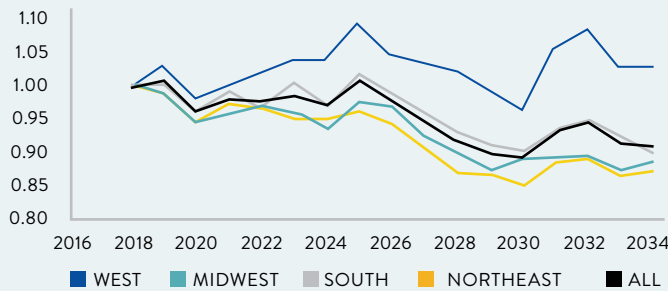
HOPE FOR TOMORROW

As much as COVID has challenged us, the past two years may also prepare us for our future. In particular, the pandemic re-taught us many important lessons. Here are just a few.

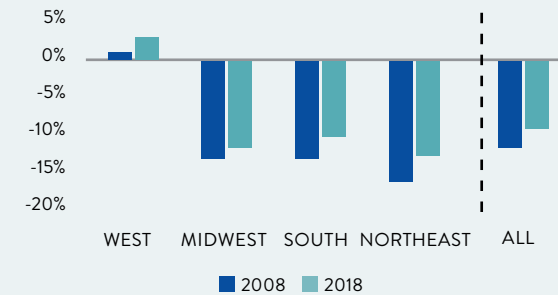
- **Effective teaching and learning is student-centered.** In the spring of 2020, students met with advisors to decide whether to return to campus the following fall. In that moment, the stakes were palpably high. Congressional bailouts were still uncertain, and the potential for a catastrophic decline in enrollment was all too real. Those advising meetings turned intensely personal as faculty

A DIVERSIFYING STUDENT BODY: HOW CCCU INSTITUTIONS COMPARE

Projected Prospective Students for Four-Year Institutions Among Top 100 Colleges & Universities with 2018 CCCU Race/Ethnicity Distribution, Relative to Level in 2018 (by Region)



Reductions in Prospective Students assuming 2008 and 2018 CCCU Race/Ethnicity Distributions, 2018 to 2034



Source: Author's calculations based on data from the American Community Survey (2017), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Vital Statistics Reports (2018, 67(7)), 2009 High School Longitudinal Study (restricted and unrestricted), the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (2011; 2015), <https://diversity.cccu.org/#about-the-cccu>, and <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/november/international-students-enrollment-christian-college-covid19.html>

For a variety of reasons, the racial and ethnic make-up of CCCU students doesn't exactly match that of college attendees as a whole. But we can use data on the racial distribution of CCCU students to re-weight projections to a population that looks like students on CCCU campuses. If CCCU schools continue to recruit from the same student groups, we might expect the national pool of 18-year-olds looking at Christian colleges and universities to decline more than 5% through 2034, with losses in the Midwest and Northeast reaching 10%.

But even as Christian higher education faces demographic headwinds, over the past decade CCCU institutions have proven responsive to demographic change. Between 2008–09 and 2018–19, the share of non-white CCCU students nearly doubled from 17% to 31%. Work to reach new student groups has already paid dividends by reducing the projected decline in prospective students by about one-third.



and staff worked to understand just what would be necessary to allow each student to re-enroll. That experience can foster an appreciation of the power of deeply personal learning relationships and can provide a useful starting point for many initiatives designed to respond to shrinking student pools.

- **A powerful residential education is more than a rental contract.** In 2020–21, like many others, my home institution saw most students return. However, campus life was anything but normal. Many classes remained online, and our residential life program was severely limited by pandemic precautions. In too many ways, students experienced the college more as a landlord than as a curator of a rich residential learning community. As we come out of COVID, we have an opportunity to learn from that loss. What did we really miss when it was taken away? What elements of the residential experience showed themselves to be particularly critical by the pain we felt in their absence? In years to come, the answers to these questions should guide our investments as we create a vibrant learning environment.
- **Retention is a holistic problem with holistic solutions.** Distance learning in the pandemic offered many faculty members a digital window into students' homes, and with that experience came rich learning opportunities. For example, in my office hours, I saw that what originally presented as a "math problem" may actually have reflected differences in social or financial capital. From these experiences, faculty have learned what the literature tells us — that retention is a holistic problem requiring holistic solutions. This recognition is a great foundation for work ahead to address declining student numbers with retention initiatives.
- **Higher education is agile.** All of those jokes about how sclerotic we are — jokes that many of us in higher education even tell ourselves — are untrue. As we depart pandemic-era education, we should take hold of our agile identity as we adapt to meet demographic change. At the same time, we must also recognize that some colleagues have experienced change fatigue, and more than a few institutions were strained by the process of pandemic decision-making. As we take on the mantle of agility, we also need to lean into relationships of shared governance, seeking reconciliation where needed.

#### A NON-APOCALYPTIC METAPHOR

In a blog post, Ed Venit of EAB once pointed to a metaphor for higher education's challenges with demographic change, one that is significantly more useful than "the Apocalypse": the antifragile system described by Nassim Nicolas Taleb in his

book *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder*. Taleb notes that there are three responses to stress. We usually think of two of them. We know we don't want to be fragile: I'm put under stress and I break. As we run from the broken transformation of fragility, we often aspire to resilience or robustness. Like a turtle, we are tempted to hunker down in our shell and let the stress pass over us leaving us unchanged. But there is a third, more positive response: antifragility. The antifragile system embraces stress-induced change and actually becomes stronger. For example, my skeletal, muscular, and cardiovascular systems all become stronger when I step onto a treadmill.

If we take the antifragile view of what higher education is experiencing right now — frankly, whether we're confronting COVID or demographic change — a different picture emerges. In 2045, I don't hope that we'll look back and say, "Wow! That was fun." There are going to be difficult choices, and we're going to have to change, and that's hard. But I do hope we can look back and see that we've expanded access, made greater connection between the work students do on campus and the lives of meaning that they will lead after they graduate, and increased rates of retention and student success. If we do reach that point, while the process of getting there will not necessarily have been fun, it may well have been worthwhile. We might yet rejoice and conclude that we are better fulfilling our missions so that we can continue to serve students and, in your case, serve God and his kingdom for decades to come. 🙏

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# EMERGING GENDER IDENTITIES



Understanding  
the Diverse  
Experiences of  
Today's Youth

BY MARK YARHOUSE,  
JULIA SADUSKY, AND ANNA BROSE



A CORE TENET OF THE CCCU’S WORK IS TO ASSIST INSTITUTIONS IN ADDRESSING AND ENGAGING THE CURRENT ISSUES OF THE DAY. AT THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL FORUM, MARK YARHOUSE, THE DIRECTOR OF WHEATON COLLEGE’S SEXUAL & GENDER IDENTITY INSTITUTE AND A CCCU SENIOR FELLOW, LED A HIGHLY ATTENDED, WELL-REVIEWED SESSION ON EMERGING GENDER IDENTITIES. WE ASKED HIM TO ADAPT CONTENT FROM THAT SESSION INTO AN ARTICLE TO SERVE AS A RESOURCE FOR ANY CCCU INSTITUTION ENGAGING THIS ISSUE ON CAMPUS.

In this article, we want to help leaders at CCCU institutions think through what we in our book refer to as emerging gender identities and expression, particularly shifts that have been reported in the past five years and how Christian colleges have been responding. We invite you to consider ways to intentionally engage the topic in light of your institution’s theological commitments surrounding gender, gender identity, and gender expression and the current cultural experience of today’s emerging adults.

TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES AND EMERGING GENDER IDENTITIES, PAST AND PRESENT

Transgender is an umbrella term for many ways a person experiences or expresses a gender identity that does not correspond to their biological sex. Emerging gender identities are under another umbrella term — gender non-binary — in which a person experiences their gender identity as in between or outside of the binary of male/female. Emerging gender identities include bigender, demigender, graygender, and pangender.

Though this article won’t delve into the past too deeply here, we suggest in our book that many cultures throughout history have responded to what we today refer to as transgender experiences and diverse gender identities. In the past, cultures have previously understood them in mental health terms, moral terms, sacred terms, or other categories. Broader Western society now places transgender experiences and emerging gender identities in a diversity category (rather than, say, a mental health or moral category) and celebrates them as aspects of diversity.

HOW COMMON ARE EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSE GENDER IDENTITIES?

Many previous prevalence estimates centered on gender dysphoria (or other prior diagnostic categorizations) and were limited to those who sought medical treatment at specialty clinics. These led to remarkably low prevalence estimates, as those who identify as transgender or non-binary comprise a much broader group than those who pursue medical transition. Indeed, according to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, most transgender adults do not report the use of hormone treatment or gender confirmation surgery.

Thus, in terms of this broader understanding of transgender identity, current prevalence estimates range from 0.5% to 1.3% of adults (Herman et al., 2017; Zucker, 2017). These prevalence estimates are fairly comparable across race and ethnicity — the Williams Institute estimated that 0.8% of African-

American or Black adults, 0.8% of Latino or Hispanic adults, 0.5% of white adults, and 0.6% of adults of another race or ethnicity identify as transgender.

Where we do see greater statistical differences are across generations. A recent 2022 Gallup Poll reflected higher prevalence estimates among Gen Z (2.1%) compared to Millennials (1.0%), Gen X (0.6%), or Boomers (0.1%) (Jones, 2022).

The breakdown among adult transgender individuals in the U.S. is that 33% identify as transgender women, 29% as transgender men, and 35% as non-binary (James, et al., 2016). As we noted above, non-binary is an umbrella term that may mean different things to different people, but emerging gender identities in some ways exist under this umbrella and appear to represent a growing number of young adults.

WHEN DO PEOPLE EXPERIENCE A DISCORDANT GENDER IDENTITY?

In the mental health field, we tend to think about early and late onset of gender dysphoria. Early development would be prior to the onset of puberty, while later development would be at or after puberty. In the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, participants were asked the age at which they felt their gender was different than their biological sex. This is not quite the same thing as gender dysphoria, but it provides important information on when people first experience a discordant gender identity. Most (60%) reported recalling that difference before puberty, with 32% reporting experiencing that at age 5 or

younger and 28% reporting experiencing that between 6 and 10 years of age. Of those who experienced it later in life (what mental health professionals might think of as late onset), 21% reported experiencing that discordance between ages 11 and 15, 13% between ages 16 and 20, and 6% at age 21 or older.

This suggests that some students will have already explored gender identity questions prior to applying to college; some students will be navigating gender identity and view the start of college/university as an ideal time to start anew; and some students will find themselves exploring gender identity for the first time while a student enrolled at a college or university.

Gender specialty clinics are also seeing a rise in late onset gender dysphoria, especially among those born female (referred to as natal females) (de Graaf, et al, 2018). Late onset experiences had historically been considered “much less common” among natal females. The recent shift from the number of early to late onset cases, and the gender ratio flip from male to female presentations, has been a source of some professional and public discussion.

We haven’t seen a lot of research that accounts for the rise in late onset experiences, particularly among natal females. However, one study (Littman, 2018) reported on the perceptions of teenage daughters by parents who indicated their daughters experienced gender dysphoria later (at or after puberty) and that many reported their teenager had other mental health concerns, experienced trauma or stressful events, and had engaged in some self-harm prior to the gender dysphoria. All studies have methodological limitations, and that was true for this study as well. Limitations included not interviewing or surveying the teenagers themselves, recruiting from parent groups that already believed in the phenomenon that was being investigated, and other concerns.

WHAT EXPLAINS THE RISE IN THE NUMBER OF DIVERSE GENDER IDENTITIES?

Many specialists in this area look at the rise in cases and describe more of what we refer to in our book as a “self-awareness” explanation. That is, young people who would reflect those experiences would have existed and have always existed across cultures and throughout history, but because society is now more accepting of diverse gender identities, they now have the level of societal acceptance necessary for understanding oneself.

The other primary explanation of what is going on has to do with the possibility of “social contagion.” That is, social reinforcement of diverse gender identities among peer groups is the root explanation of the increase, with the thought that females may be more susceptible to such peer influence. This was one of the conclusions Littman considered as a result of the study she conducted.

What we have suggested is that while both explanations should be studied further, our reading of what is going on maps on better to what Ian Hacking describes as “a looping effect.” (We describe it briefly here, but for greater detail, see *Emerging Gender Identities*, pp. 27-43).

The looping effect is basically the concept of how people are affected by language and classifications and how language and classifications are affected by people’s experiences — both shape each other. Put differently,



**Mark Yarhouse** is a clinical psychologist specializing in conflicts tied to religious identity and sexual and gender identity. He is an award-winning teacher and researcher and serves as the Dr. Arthur P. Rech and Mrs. Jean May Rech Professor of Psychology as well as the director of the Sexual & Gender Identity (SGI) Institute at Wheaton College. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters and is the author or co-author of several books.



**Julia Sadusky** is a licensed psychologist and owner of Lux Counseling and Consulting (Littleton, CO). Yarhouse and Sadusky co-authored *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today’s Youth* (Brazos, 2020).



**Anna Brose** is in her second year in the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology at Wheaton College, where she is a member of SGI and the Wheaton College Mental Health Collective and serves as research assistant to Yarhouse.

Photos courtesy of the subjects



RECOMMENDED READING

**Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth** (Mark A. Yarhouse and Julia Sandusky, Brazos, 2020)

**Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say** (Preston Sprinkle, David C. Cook, 2021)

**Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views** (ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, Baker, 2019)

**Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses** (Mark A. Yarhouse, Janet B. Dean, Stephen P. Stratton, and Michael Lastoria, IVP Academic, 2018)

**Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture** (Mark A. Yarhouse, IVP Academic, 2015)



language and concepts shape lives, which shapes language and concepts. It is an ongoing dynamic that Hacking described as a five-step cyclical pattern:

- (1) *Classification*: what names do we give groups, things, or ideas;
- (2) *People*: the individuals that fit into the group, name, or classification;
- (3) *Institutions*: the organizations or structures that arise in order to understand the classification and aid the people;
- (4) *Knowledge*: the place/existence of amassing knowledge about the theoretical underpinnings of the classification; and
- (5) *Experts*: selected individuals who give ample time to know, understand, and theorize about said classifications.

We also suggested that there may be extended steps of the looping effect, such as *industry* — that is, the societal engagement and response to these classifications that goes beyond the institutions. This includes how these ideas are used and reflected in media, for example, as well as the meeting place of expert knowledge/institutional practice and popular understanding. It also includes the growth of service provision around these ideas. Rather than discuss “social contagion” as such, we would acknowledge peer influence as it is embedded in this thick interconnectedness of what counts as knowledge (determined by experts) and the use of ideas in media, social media, and so on (industry). There is mutual shaping that goes on here.

Put another way, the capacity for diverse gender experiences to be present already exists to some extent and in some form — but as we name them, we also give opportunity for these ideas and experiences to begin to emerge.

Thus, thinking this through as Christians is important in the discussion of gender identities because many people wonder, *Did these really exist all this time, or are we just coming up with new names and ideas and therefore creating something new?* This question matters because embedded in it are the questions, *Are gender identities real, essential things, or are they social constructions? Is a social construction just something a person thought up and now people are changing to fit into?*

An extended discussion of these questions is beyond the scope of this article, but what we can grasp from the looping effect theory is that there may be space for aspects of both claims to be true: Different capacities for gender experiences have existed, and the naming and creation of linguistic categories for these experiences has shaped what they have become and how they are experienced and expressed today.

What’s important to consider here in regards to the work of CCCU institutions is that students coming to campus are emerging adults who have been and are interacting with new language and categories for understanding themselves and their gender. This language and these categories were not available to students of previous generations. Students will need help navigating what they experience, along with these changing and emerging linguistic constructs, in light of their own Christian faith. Is your institution poised to help them do that?

STUDENTS NAVIGATING GENDER IDENTITY AT CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

What will we see on campus in the coming years? We will likely see transgender (cross-gender) experiences, emerging gender identities (such as gender non-binary and various new and emerging linguistic constructs for naming variations in gender experiences), or gender dysphoria itself (or the distress that

WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER HERE IN REGARDS TO THE WORK OF CCCU INSTITUTIONS IS THAT STUDENTS COMING TO CAMPUS ARE EMERGING ADULTS WHO HAVE BEEN AND ARE INTERACTING WITH NEW LANGUAGE AND CATEGORIES FOR UNDERSTANDING THEMSELVES AND THEIR GENDER. THIS LANGUAGE AND THESE CATEGORIES WERE NOT AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS.

can be associated with a more discordant gender identity). We may also see some emerging adults who are searching for identity and community and have landed on gender diverse experiences as a reflection of the cultural salience of this moment.

We do not yet have much research on the experiences of students navigating gender identity at Christian colleges and universities. Yarhouse, Dean, Stratton, Keefe, and Lastoria (2021) recently published a study of 31 transgender or otherwise gender diverse students from nine Christian undergraduate institutions. These students were highly religious and spiritual, but their beliefs and doctrinal positions on gender identity and gender expression varied considerably. They also reported different attitudes toward campus policies related to gender and gender expression.

Campus climate was perceived by the students to be largely negative, which is similar to what has been reported at secular institutions. What appears to contribute to the negative environment are comments from other students, more so than faculty or staff. Resources that do exist on campus appeared to be underutilized by students in this sample.

On one measure of mental health, it was reported that “more than three-quarters of the sample were demonstrating moderate to high distress” (Yarhouse et al., 2021, p. 4496). Frequency of past suicide attempt was higher than what is reported in the general population of students but comparable to what has been reported among transgender students at secular universities.

Obviously, more research needs to be done on the experiences of students navigating gender identity and faith at Christian colleges and universities, but it was concluded that “Many of the transgender students ... were doing more poorly than their cisgender peers, which appears to be consistent with what is reported from samples obtained from non-faith-based colleges and universities” (p. 4497).

OPTIONS FOR MACRO-LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS

As we close this article, we want to offer a few thoughts on ways to think through your institution’s engagement around emerging gender identities. A key recommendation we have discussed elsewhere (e.g., in *Listening to Sexual Minorities*, included in the recommended reading list) is to distinguish macro-level and micro-level engagement. Macro-level has to do with policies and procedures that are informed by theological commitments. Micro-level has to do with interpersonal relationships. Both macro-level and micro-level engagement

will be informed to some extent by the lens through which you see gender, gender identity, and gender expression.

In our contribution to *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views* (Baker, 2019), we wrote that we see Christian institutions responding to diverse gender identities through several different lenses. Lens one treats diverse gender identities as a concern to be corrected. As such, there is no cross-gender or other-gender identity or expression allowed by policy. Stated positively, identity and expression that corresponds to biological or natal sex is viewed as reflecting creational intent, and gender-related policies encourage students toward reliance on God for managing gender dysphoria in ways that reflect creational intent as the preferred vision for flourishing.

Lens two focuses on different gender identities’ experiences to be empathized with. In a fallen world, cross- or other-gender identity and expression will occur. Stated positively, diverse gender identity and expression will be discussed and supported on a case-by-case basis. There may be more emphasis on “how I am” (“I am a person who experiences gender dysphoria”) rather than “who I am” (“I am transgender” or “I am gender non-binary”). Policies suggest students manage gender dysphoria in individualized ways (on a case-by-case basis) and grow in faith through enduring hardship as the preferred vision for flourishing.

Lens three looks at gender identities as part of an emerging culture to be celebrated. There is an assumption that there will be cross- or other-gender identity and expression. There is a celebration of personhood as it is experienced. Stated positively, identity and expression will be discussed and supported. Policies are broadly supportive and may include support for social or possibly medical transitioning as reflecting “who I am” (rather than “how I am”) as the preferred vision for flourishing.

These lenses (or some combination of aspects of them) have implications for programming, education, support services, bathroom access, locker room use, housing, health care and counseling, records, and documentation. Perhaps further reflection on your institutional lens or lenses will help clarify macro-level policy development.

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MICRO-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

Your micro-level engagement has to do with interpersonal relationships on campus. This will come out of student development, resident life, the counseling center, the classroom, and many other ways that students, staff, and faculty engage one another across campus.

Micro-level responses can also reflect lenses through which people see gender identities. But what we hope the reader will consider across all three lenses is a basic approach to valuing students navigating gender identity questions, new language and categories for gender identity, and their Christian faith. This will entail, at minimum, listening to them, demonstrating their value to God and to the community, and finding practical ways to support them. We encourage the reader to think creatively about fostering a campus environment that enables students to take their gender seriously, to take their Christian faith seriously, and to take ways of relating their faith and gender seriously.

CONCLUSION

It may be helpful to frame this topic as students navigating gender identity and faith at their Christian college or university. The question that comes up then is, *How does your institution equip them to do so?* We are at our best when we take the initiative to understand and provide support to students navigating gender identity and religious identity. We have tried to make the case that students navigating gender identity on campus will not just be transgender,

but will also be identifying as non-binary or reflecting other emerging gender identities, most of which takes place prior to enrollment at college. In other words, students are engaging with the categories and language available to them today, which varies greatly from even a generation or two previously.

Some students will see moving to college as a time to transition, if that is something they are considering, while others will experience gender identity questions for the first time at college. How your institution engages these experiences of emerging gender identities will likely be a reflection of the lens or lenses through which you see this topic. This will reflect theological commitments held around sex and gender, gender norms, gender identity, and gender expression that will inform policy development at the macro-level and interpersonal relationships at the micro-level, as you consider implementation with students, staff, and faculty. 🗨️

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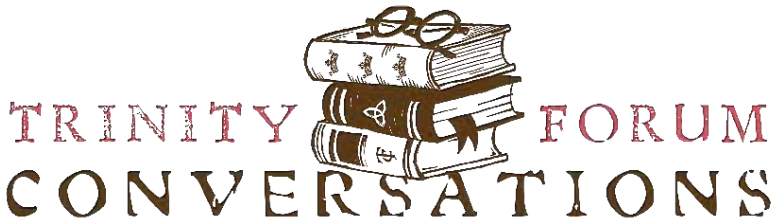
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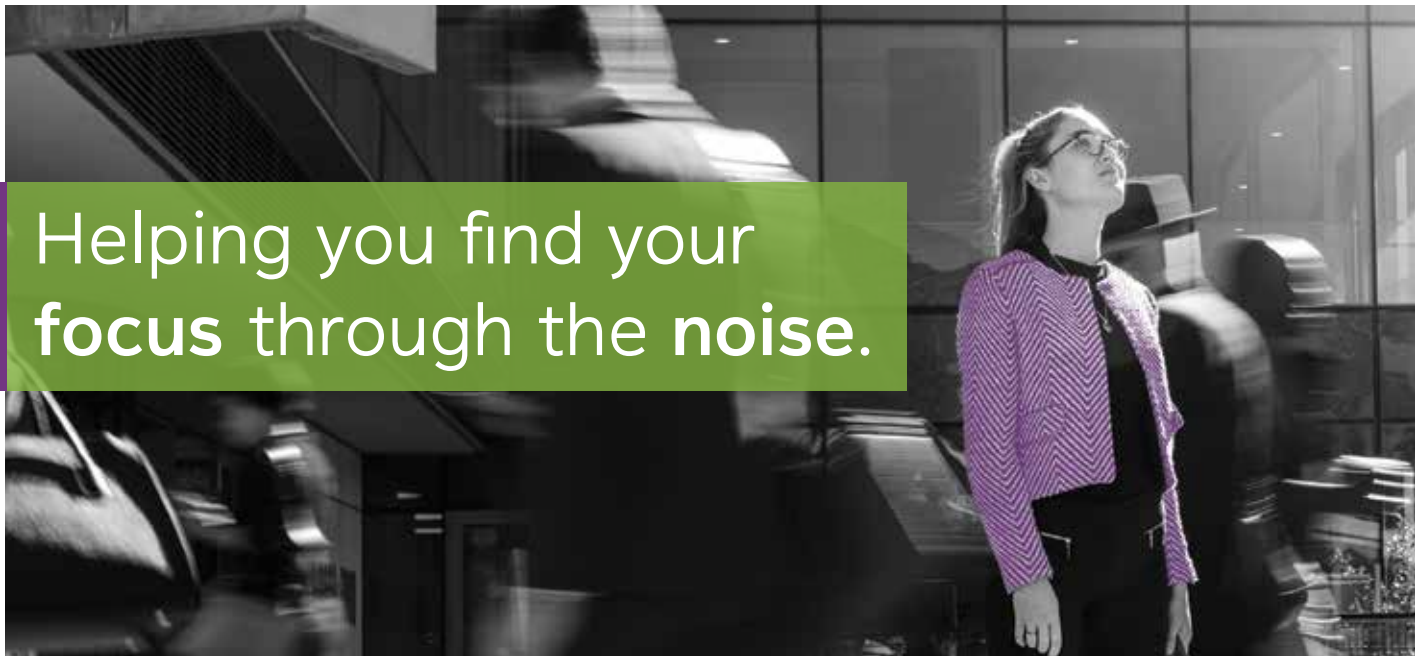


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# FAITHFUL PRESENCE

Christian presence in all fields is more important than ever.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL HASLAM  
AND DAN BOONE

**“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK** ... the merciful ... the peacemakers.” In the current cultural and political context, Jesus’ words from Matthew 5 might not seem like the right approach for leaders who want to get things accomplished in the face of opposition.

But Bill Haslam says it’s the best approach, and he speaks from personal experience. The former two-term Tennessee governor (2011-2019), who also has experience as a mayor and business leader, helped the state become recognized as a national leader in education and economic development. His deep Christian faith served as the foundation for his leadership.

Now, in his new book *Faithful Presence: The Promise and Peril of Faith in the Public Square*, Haslam draws on his experience to reiterate the importance of Jesus’ call for deep humility, love of mercy, and commitment to justice in the lives of leaders. Dan Boone, president of Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee, talked with Haslam about the book and the lessons it can offer Christian college and university leaders.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



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**Dan Boone: Why this book? Why did you decide, on the other side of a governorship, that this is what you wanted to invest your time in writing and thinking?**

**Bill Haslam:** I think one of the biggest disappointments for me from being in public life — being a mayor for two terms and a governor for two terms — was that Christians act just like everyone else in the public square. If there’s any message we should take away from the Sermon on the Mount — or really from any scriptural instruction — it’s that we’re to be different.

But the problem is that Christians aren’t any different in the public square. We’re just as likely to be hateful toward our enemies. We’re just as likely to say things on the internet that we’d never say in person. We’re just as likely to spread unbounded, unfounded rumors about things and conspiracy theories as everyone else. So this [book] was my attempt to say, “What would it look like if we actually tried to act the way that Christ calls us to act in the public square?”

**You mentioned the Sermon on the Mount a lot through the book. I can tell that the meekness and humility that Jesus requires of us has significant impact in your life. What gives you hope that it can survive the rigor of the mean public square that we’re living in these days, and how do you think our Christian colleges and universities are important players in raising up a generation to do that?**

That’s the fundamental question that people ask, though they don’t phrase it as nicely as you do. They say, “Okay, Haslam, all that’s fine. But the stakes are too high for this kind of unilateral surrender in this big battle that’s going on. You’re asking us to bring a pillow to a knife fight, and the other side’s going to win if we act the way that you’re asking us to act.” But it’s not me asking you to act like that. That’s what Jesus asked us to act like.

I was speaking to a group of pastors recently, and one of them at the end raised his hand and said, “Well, can you tell us anywhere where that has worked before?” I remember thinking, “Well, that’s the wrong question.” The question is how do we act like a faithful presence? How do we actually be salt and light in this world? In other places in life, we don’t say, “Well, all this scriptural stuff, is that actually effective and practical?” We don’t say that in business. We say, “No, you’re supposed to act ethically, regardless.” We don’t say that in marriage. ... We don’t give ourselves those waivers [elsewhere], but here we do.

So what gives me confidence? It’s this: At the end of the day, the ways that God wants us to act are because those are the true ways. The world may or may not react to those the way that we want them to, but that’s not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to be faithful in those places where he’s called us. ...



**Sometimes I think people believe that if you're humble, if you're meek, if you listen to people and you treat them with respect, for some reason that becomes an excuse for not actually getting things done or succeeding at what you're trying to do. But the exact opposite was true in your administration. We watched Tennessee become a state that invited all kind of industries to come here. We watched the financial health of the state grow dramatically. We watched education happen in wonderful ways. ... How is it that you were able to display Christian character that worked in terms of great leadership?**

The answer to that is a little bit the same as answer to your first question. Probably the most widely known and most popular business book of all time is Jim Collins' *Good to Great*. If you remember the basic theory, the researchers weren't starting with any preconceived ideas about what made a leader great. They started with a blind test that said, we want to look at companies that for 10 years had matched their peers in market return and then, when they had a new leader, had [market return] results that were multiple that of their peers. So the study



**BILL HASLAM**  
*Former Tennessee Governor*  
(2011-2019)

Photo courtesy of Bill Haslam

started with 10,000 and boiled down to a handful [that met the criteria], and then they looked at what was in common with those leaders.

After all was said and done, there were two common criteria that were true of all of these leaders. The first is they were very mission-focused people. They knew why they were there. The second was they were people who understood that the story was not about them. Well, that's a pretty good description of what we're supposed to be like as believers. We're supposed to be mission-focused and understand that this story is not about us. So the way that Jesus says that we're supposed to act — turns out that's what's good for us, anyway.

**On our campuses, we're trying to have conversations about issues that are as divisive and explosive as any we've ever seen. ... As we are in this work of forming a generation of college students that know how to have the hard conversations about difficult issues, what from your leadership experience, and especially your faithful presence in those kinds of conversations, might help faculty and college leaders negotiate this?**

There's one thing that we should always bring to every discussion we're a part of

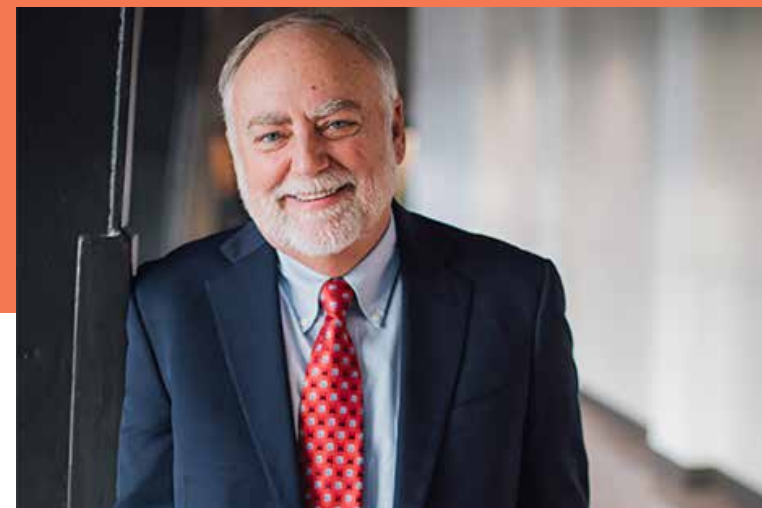
as believers. And that's the Romans 3:23 idea, that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So I'm walking into [a tough] conversation realizing I don't get everything right. I don't get everything right in my personal life or my relational life, and I don't get it all right in my intellectual life, either. So when I enter into that conversation, it has to be with this sense of, "I'm here to listen because I know that I'm very capable of mistakes." So I start with that.

I start also with the idea that God is concerned about the common good — for God so loved the world. So my objective is not to win the argument; my objective is to get to the right argument. If the story's about me, then I need to win the argument. If it's not about me, then I need to get to the right answer. ...

And people ask me, "Well, that's great, but don't you end up getting run over?" I say, "How is it working out now?" Have you ever argued someone into agreeing with you? Have you ever ridiculed someone into agreeing with you? No. Nobody's ever ridiculed me into saying, "Oh, you're right — your clever put-down on Twitter made me realize you're exactly right. From now on, I'm going to see the way the world the way you do."

**When you were engaged in one of those heated topics, and the table was filled with people of diverse opinions, what was happening in the back of your mind and in the heart of your soul ... to hear God say, "Don't go there; don't respond in this way"?**

Photo courtesy of Dan Boone



**DAN BOONE**  
*President, Trevecca Nazarene University*  
(Nashville, TN)

Let me answer first truthfully and say there were so many times that I was at the table and every part of my brain and heart was saying, "How do I win this argument?" That's where we all go. I have to admit there a lot of times that I'm just as frustrated in the middle of those conversations as everyone. ...

But I have a couple of practical points. The first one is that in those arguments, it helps to have someone on your team who knows you, cares about you, and is for you in the best sense of the word — not just as in "I'm on Dan's team and I want him to win this argument," but rather "I'm on Dan's team and I want him to end up in the right place." The example I use a lot is the person who was my general counsel, Herbert Slatery. He's a longtime friend and a member of a group of men that I met with every Friday morning for 25 years. There were a lot of times, when the room emptied, he'd quietly walk up to me and say, "Hey, you know where we ended up there, that's not you." So I think it helps to have somebody around you who cares for you enough to lovingly encourage or rebuke you — whatever needs to happen at that point in time.

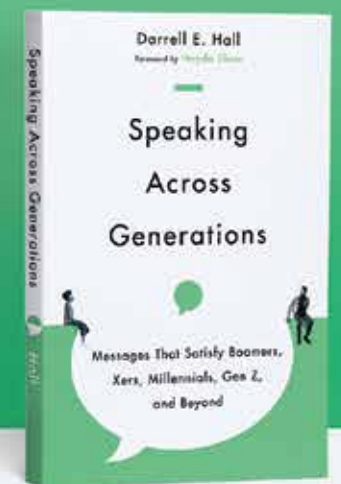
The second is a practice I've started. In the middle of discussions, every so often within myself, I have a 15-second check.

It's to reorient myself: "What's my heart feeling right now? Is that a good thing to be feeling?" God wants to hear our prayers that are on us in those moments: "God, right now, I'm wanting to tear off the head of the person across the table from me. Help me to see this situation in a different way." And having those kind of periodic unspoken timeouts in your head for about 15 seconds, I found to be helpful.

**One of the hopes that our Christian university presidents all over the world have is that we might give to the world graduates who know how to be respectful and loving and kind, even in the middle of heated conversation. ... We're sending students into business and medicine and education and all other kinds of places. When you think about the world that we live in, what would you say to the colleges and universities, especially the CCCU schools, about what we need to do for these graduates?**

I think Christian colleges have a unique role and responsibility in terms of forming people to live in the middle of a world that's at each other's throats, in which there's a whole lot of conversations that

# Bridging the Generational Divide



## How to Speak the Language of Other Generations



**DARRELL HALL**



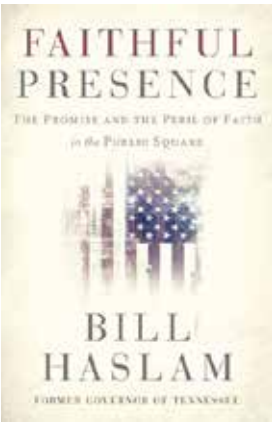
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[make us want] to stay in a safer place. But we have both the challenge and the opportunity to do something when Paul tells us to speak the truth in love. People take a lot of pride in being one or the other. Some are like, “Well, I’m just a truth-teller. I tell it the way it is.” And they take great pride in that, but you never feel much love out of those folks. Other people are like, “My calling is to love those people around me,” and they do, but they get to be like willows in a hurricane — they blow over pretty easily.

And so I think our challenge is to be those people who speak the truth with love and do both of those things. We’re “And” people. We believe in justice and mercy. We believe in love and truth. What a Christian college can help people to do — because they’re certainly not going to hear that conversation many other places — is say, “Here’s what it looks like to act justly and love mercy at the same. Here’s what it looks like to speak truth with love.” To me, that’s the head start you’re giving to your graduates.

**Yeah. And what’s sad is that the generation of students in college right now has been shaped by a culture that says, if someone disagrees with you, figure out a way to shame and exclude them, rather than sitting down for a cup of coffee and a conversation with them. ... You had a statement in the book that I thought was great — that we would be “reasonable people in unreasonable places.” I find myself in those places all the time, but I know that ... this generation is living in a world that has taught them to fight in ways that divide culture and make enemies. How do we be those reasonable people in unreasonable places? And how do we raise up a generation to do that?**



**Faithful Presence:  
The Promise and the  
Peril of Faith in the  
Public Square**

By Bill Haslam  
(Thomas Nelson)

I think that’s part of what calling looks like. Your graduates are going into the market in a fairly unique place in the sense that they’re looking for calling. As we know, God doesn’t always call us to places that are reasonable. He sent Paul, who was the “Jew of Jews,” to minister to Gentiles. [Paul] had the perfect background to reach out to the Pharisees and the Sadducees; he knew that world real well. But that’s not what he was called to do.

I stole that phrase from a person who used to be a New York Times columnist, Nicholas Kristof, who wrote about how [in his travels], he ends up in all these places where there are very reasonable people doing unreasonable things. ... It’s all about this need to be listening to those places where God’s calling us to, even if it doesn’t exactly make sense to the rest of the world.

My guess is, you have a lot of CCCU graduates every year that could’ve done anything, and they chose to do something that the world didn’t quite expect them to do. Again, we’re living by a rule book that’s been turned upside-down by Jesus. So there are times when we’re going to

do things that people are going to scratch their heads about. And I hope that’s always true. ...

**What’s your parting word of hope and wisdom and grace to those who are trying to lead Christian colleges these days? What do you hope we can accomplish and give to the world?**

My hope is that Christian colleges can produce those graduates who say, “Given where the world is right now, how do I be a faithful presence right here?” And the verse that I use all the time is from Jeremiah 29, when the Israelites are being held in captivity in Babylon and Jeremiah is back in Jerusalem. If I’m [in Babylon,] I’m hoping he says, “Hey, we’re coming to get you; keep your head down.” But he says, basically, “Get used to it. You’re going to be there a while; build houses, and plant gardens, and marry your children. Seek the welfare of the place where I have called you.” I think that’s what we’re called to do — to seek the welfare of those places where God has called us.

And I hope some of your graduates do go into public service, because it really is a great chance to make a difference. But regardless of whether they’re called [into politics] or not, they are called to be seeking the welfare [of where they are]. Sometimes that looks like discussions around the water cooler, or in internet chat groups, or wherever you’re having discussions. Sometimes it might look like running for school board. Sometimes it might look like just helping someone else. But wherever you are called, think about what it looks like to do this the way God would want you to instead of the way you’re being pulled [by culture]. 🙏



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# GOD'S LAW AND ORDER

## THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND EVANGELICALISM

AN INTERVIEW WITH AARON GRIFFITH  
AND CAMILLE MESSER

*In discussions about America's criminal justice system, one might hear about the disproportionate impact of incarceration among poor and nonwhite populations, or the high rates of recidivism, or the sheer numbers of incarcerated individuals in American jails and prisons. For evangelical Christians, there's also often talk about the importance of caring for those in prison, for offering support to families, and for advocating for reform.*

*In his research, Aaron Griffith, assistant professor of history at Whitworth University (Spokane, WA), explores an under-discussed but important connection between evangelical Christianity and the origins of American mass incarceration. His book, God's Law and Order: The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America, has received high praise for its exploration of how evangelical ideas of sin, punishment, and justice have shaped the American criminal justice system — and the implications for current efforts to reform the criminal justice system and care for those in prison.*

*Griffith is the winner of the 2021 Emerging Public Intellectual Award, hosted by Redeemer University (and sponsored by several organizations, including the CCCU), which was presented at the 2022 CCCU International Forum. Camille Messer, the CCCU's government relations fellow, talked with Griffith about his research and its implications for Christians and for CCCU institutions specifically. The interview has been adapted for length and clarity; to view the full interview, visit the CCCU's YouTube page ([www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo](http://www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo)).*

**Camille Messer:** What inspired you to write the book? What spiked your personal and intellectual interest in the topic?

**Aaron Griffith:** During my doctoral studies, I was reading all these wonderful books on the history of American religion and especially the influence of American evangelicals in politics and culture. Around that time, I began a course with Douglas Campbell, a New Testament professor at Duke, on prisons and prison ministry. In that course, I was first academically introduced to issues of criminal justice. I started to wonder how these two topics — the study of American evangelicals and the study of criminal justice — intersect with each other. I was curious what evangelicals were up to in the 20th century as prisons were beginning to expand and grow.

Those questions were the beginning of the intellectual project, but there was a personal side to it as well. I have long known people who have been incarcerated, who are Christians, and who have narrated their own experiences of incarceration to me with reference to their faith. During divinity school, I also started volunteering in a prison ministry. It was there in the work of prison ministry — in meeting volunteers, fellow Christians who were doing this work, and in building relationships with incarcerated people — that I saw the need for Christians and for myself to reflect historically about prisons.

As Christians serve the incarcerated as Jesus call us to do, we also need to reflect on how Christians have failed in the past. We need to ask: Where have we succeeded? What problems are there that we need to be aware of? What ways are we complicit in some of the prison system's most grievous problems? [The book is also written to be] a resource to equip people like me who were going into prisons, wanting to do prison ministry, and were trying to think thoughtfully about the work we were doing.

In your research, what ways have evangelicals both positively and negatively shaped the systems of incarceration? What are evangelicals' explicit and implicit legacies?

That is a story that is much bigger than even my book. My research on evangelicals in the 20th century focuses on three big movements of evangelical influence on crime and punishment. The first is evangelical influence in law and order politics, in anti-crime efforts. The second is evangelical influence in prison ministries, especially in the 1960s and '70s, where evangelicals were going into prisons, offering pastoral care to incarcerated people, evangelizing, and giving out tracts and Bibles. Finally, evangelicals have been at the forefront of many movements for criminal justice reform.

Their legacy throughout all of these is complicated. In my book, I try to show how, at every stage in these movements, evangelicals were trying to be true to their faith as they understood it, while also trying to be true to the needs and problems of their time.

It is hard to paint [the influence of evangelicals] exactly in terms of positive and negative. However, there have been times when I've seen evangelicals buy into the more punitive and more problematic aspects of the justice system: when they have seen punishment as something that in itself has to happen; that we need to set things right by making sure that these people pay. That retributive sense, that desire to make sure that the "bad guys" get what's coming to them, has led evangelicals into some pretty problematic places and has limited their ability to see the harms of our prisons and systems of punishment.

At their best, I think evangelicals have been a people who are committed to personal relationships and who see personal connection as an important part of their own faith, even while they might be skeptical of systemic issues. Evangelicals go into prisons, make

## Christian colleges have a very important role to play in bringing justice and reformation to prison systems.

AARON GRIFFITH

friendships, and build relationships with incarcerated people. Those relationships have been important catalysts for change, giving evangelicals a sense of the problems that prisoners face on a daily basis, the inefficiencies, and the inhumanities of the prison system and the justice system.

**In the 2020 presidential election, the U.S. had a choice between the self-proclaimed "law and order" President Donald Trump and Joe Biden, who was a premier "law and order" politician in the 1980s and 1990s. Do you see any appetite among the general electorate for biblically based reform?**

I think this [election] showed how deeply entrenched this is — it is not simply reducible to a "left" or "right," a Republican or Democrat issue. This is an issue of consensus. That's a big problem, because it means that all of our political instincts are, generally speaking, historically complicit here. But there is a robust tradition of critique, and especially Christian critique, of calling those punitive instincts into question. We need to draw on that; we need to look at Christians in the past who have given us the language and sensibilities to resist these forces and ask where they might be now.

And this is a great gift for Christians today because we can realize, truly, that God's ways are not our ways. Hopefully we can realize something beyond the

answers that are presented to us so often by the media — that we [have to] chose one party or the other. No, we can actually look toward something that's far deeper and richer to offer an account of human flourishing and dignity. When I talk to conservatives and when I talk to progressives about this, I'm often encouraged at how, whatever their political instincts, most people can look at the prison system itself today and realize there's a problem. They realize there's inefficiencies, disparities, inhumane things going on. And I think no matter who they voted for, there's an interest in addressing that in some way. That's good; Christians need to jump on that.

**Some might argue that we need a "colorblind" justice system to achieve Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision in his "I Have a Dream" speech. Is that the right way to think about issues of justice and incarceration?**

In my book, I make a big point that we have to pay attention to race when we look at the ways evangelicals engaged the criminal justice system in the 20th century. White evangelicals especially saw what they were doing as a colorblind effort, saying things like, "It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what color your skin is. If you do something bad, you should go to jail." In its framing, it was a colorblind argument with no overt racist intent. But what that did not take into account

were the ways that the system itself was built upon racist legacies, whether that was in terms of segregation, whether that's in terms of police and over-policing of certain neighborhoods, or which neighborhoods are the ones where police actually go.

Historically, criminality has been defined and understood by many Americans, Christians included, with the assumption that Black people in America are more prone to lawbreaking. And this racist concept of the Black predatory criminal was a tool politicians used quite effectively to scare white Christians in the 20th century into supporting punitive policies.

That history has to be acknowledged. To speak more normatively, I think colorblindness — racial neutrality — is fine as long as it is accompanied by the radical change that is needed to overturn the legacies of racism and racial injustice in the United States. They have to go together. If you just have the former, then it is simply just a way to dismiss the historical legacies, the systemic and deeply entrenched problems of racism in this country.

Today, Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a world where people are judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin is a reference that is made constantly. However, we have to go and read the

rest of that speech. There, King talks about justice. He talks about poverty. He talks about the lack of access to the voting booth and, crucially, in that speech he talks about police brutality. If we are going to inherit and act on King's vision of a colorblind dream, then we also have to face these other issues of injustice as well.

**In your book, you discuss a perpetual perception throughout American history of increasing lawlessness being correlated with increasing secularism. Is there a basis for such connection? If so, how do Christians respond?**

I actually talk about this in the first chapter by telling the story about an important trial that occurred in the 1920s of two young men named Leopold and Loeb, who famously murdered a young boy in Chicago after being inspired by the readings of Friedrich Nietzsche. They were totally convinced that there was no God and that they were not held accountable to any moral law. Christians noticed this and worried that without prosecuting and dropping the hammer on criminal behavior, this type of behavior would continue. As a researcher, what was most interesting for me [to consider] is how the justice system then becomes a way for Christians to understand the combating of secularism.

AARON GRIFFITH



Photos courtesy of Aaron Griffith and Camille Messer

CAMILLE MESSER



## PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT CCCU SCHOOLS

The CCCU has 21 institutions in 15 states with prison education programs, with two more programs set to begin in the next year. Eight CCCU institutions were selected to participate in the Second Chance Pell Experiment, giving early access to Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students prior to the July 1, 2023, lift on the 26-year ban on Pell Grant for all incarcerated students.

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Calvin University  
Campbell University  
Crown College  
Columbia International University  
Corban University  
Eastern University  
Greenville University  
Hannibal-LaGrange University  
Houghton College  
Lipscomb University  
Mississippi College  
North Park University  
Nyack College  
Oklahoma Baptist University  
Oklahoma Christian University  
Samford University  
Trinity International University  
University of the Southwest  
Wheaton College  
York College

Second Chance Pell Schools Include:

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Nyack College

2019-2020 Cohort

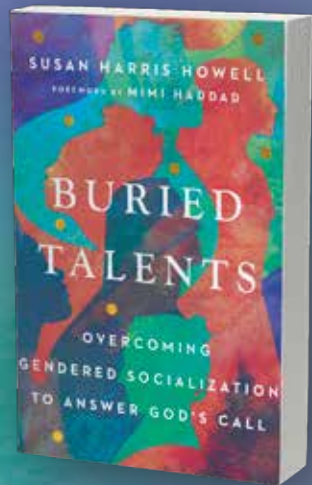
Calvin University  
Eastern University  
University of the Southwest

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Campbell University  
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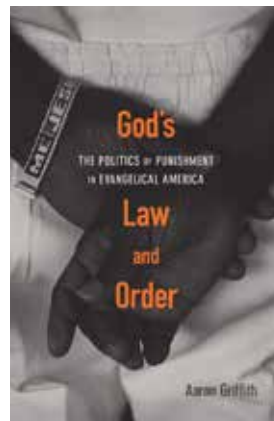
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Academic

My own sense is that losing a religious impulse — and for Christians, losing our robust theological heritage and language — is concerning. However, I also think that Christians today need to focus less on notions of lawlessness and rule breaking, and more simply on justice and dignity. We need to ask: Are our laws, rules, and policies oriented towards justice and human dignity, or are they oriented to making sure people check boxes and follow the rules? Are the rules themselves actually just and in accordance with how God would have us live?

**Thinking specifically about Christian colleges and universities, what role do they have to play in helping bring about justice and reformation to prison systems? Specifically, how do prison education programs help the incarcerated?**

I think Christian colleges, and higher educational institutions in general, have a very important role to play in bringing justice and reformation to prison systems. First, we need to talk about these issues not simply in criminology or criminal justice majors, but throughout our studies of politics, philosophy, and theology to help our students realize how deeply embedded prison system and policing are within our own society. There are powerful theological and philosophical resources that Christians have available to help them to think about these issues. The Bible is full of unbelievable stories and characters and ways of thinking about issues of justice and harm, from the Mosaic law to the fact that Paul himself is in prison and writes his letters from prison. Jesus himself was executed; he experienced an unjust system of punishment.

At its best, Christian education attends to these questions with an eye towards why they matter for our present moment. Speaking somewhat bluntly here, evangelicals are more than the



**God's Law and Order:  
The Politics of  
Punishment in  
Evangelical America**

By Aaron Griffith  
(Harvard University Press)

political issues that often get handed to us by the media and by our own history and our own traditions. We can go in new directions and open up new possibilities for thinking about issues like the prison system. More specifically, I think prison education is the perfect route for where all this can go to work. I've been blessed to be able to teach in a prison educational context at Washington University in St. Louis, and it was transformative for me. It was one of the most powerful educational contexts I've been in. And I've been really lucky to get to know people at Christian colleges doing prison education work. Places like North Park University and Seminary in Chicago and their School of Restorative Arts are bringing high-quality Christian education into prisons in Illinois with the goal of both transformation of the lives of students who are incarcerated, but also with an eye towards helping Christians and those who invest in the university think critically about what we do when we incarcerate people.

I am so inspired by North Park's program, Calvin University's Prison

Initiative, Eastern University's Prison Education Program, and others that are getting started. I want to see every CCCU school doing this work and finding ways to not simply do prison evangelism or prison ministry, but to actually see the prison as a site for partnership and relationship and as a potential body of fellow learners.

**As a professor of history at Whitworth, how do you help your students think about the complicated relationship between evangelicals and mass incarceration?**

Granted, I am still pretty new to Whitworth, so I am figuring this out. One of the things I try to do, though, is read the Bible with students and draw their attention to the numerous ways that Scripture gives us a language

and sensibility to not only think about issues of prisons, but about our obligations to one another, victims, and those who have been wronged by systems of injustice. When we read the Bible with that lens, we can come away transformed. I certainly have been, and I want my students to see that the experiences of incarceration and punishment are not an add-on to Scripture, but are woven throughout. God cares about broken relationships and broken systems, and he wants us to care about these issues, too.

The second thing I try to do is take students into prisons. This does not have to be a long sojourn hundreds of miles away; there is a county jail in most American towns, and that is a system of criminal justice. Visiting

local jails helps students understand that these systems of incarceration, funded by our tax dollars, are doing something, whether we interface with it or not. Whether it is through visits to a prison itself, or through meeting with people who work in the justice system, or activists that are trying to change it, [I want students to know] that these conversations and questions are occurring, and Christians have to be aware of this. If you are interfacing at all in public with people, you're being shaped by these logics — however positive or negative — of surveillance, of a sense of who is “suspicious” or not, and we need to interrogate that and confront that as Christians. 🙏



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**1** Attendees gave a standing ovation to plenary speaker Bryan Stevenson. **2 + 3 + 5 + 7** The schedule allowed for plenty of time for attendees to connect with each other, worship together, and spend time engaging and reflecting. **4** Aaron Griffith (center), assistant professor of history at Whitworth University, was presented the Emerging Public Intellectual Award (awarded by Redeemer University, co-sponsored by the CCCU) by Whitworth President Scott McQuilkin (left) and Stan Rosenberg, CCCU Vice President for Research and Scholarship.



**6** More than 140 sponsors and vendors were able to connect with attendees and support the work of Christian higher education. **8** Mark Yarhouse, director of the Sexual & Gender Identity Institute at Wheaton College, led a breakout session on emerging gender identities among incoming students; an adapted version is available on page 28. **9** Notetaking during a plenary session. Many evaluations of the Forum noted that the Friday plenary sessions were worth the cost of admission to the whole event.

All photos by Corey Nolen





**10 + 11 + 12** Saturday and Sunday included more than 80 concurrent sessions to engage in peer-to-peer conversations on important and timely topics. **13** The student co-founders of Imago Dei at Lee University were able to share their insights in helping the university engage in important conversations on race and ethnicity. **14** Kelsi Deel Franco, 2013 graduate of Lee University and founder/executive director of The House of Cherith, received the 2022 CCCU Young Alumni Award (given in absentia).

**15 + 17** There were plenty of hallway conversations between sessions. **16** CCCU President Shirley Hoogstra and Joy Mosley, CCCU Senior Director of Government Relations, presented the Champion of Higher Education Award to Ted Mitchell, President of the American Council on Education (ACE). **18** The exhibit hall gave attendees a chance to share meals and snacks together while also meeting with vendors.

All photos by Corey Nolen



# Justice: The Joy of Things Put Right

BY N.T. WRIGHT

*N.T. Wright is senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and has previously served as bishop of Durham in the Church of England and research professor of New Testament at the University of St. Andrews. At the 2022 CCCU International Forum, he gave a plenary talk about the biblical vision for justice. The following excerpt is from that presentation; to view it in full, visit the CCCU's YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo](http://www.youtube.com/CCCUvideo)).*

**WHEN WE SAY** the word “justice,” what emotions come to mind? Many people today might think of the rather grim atmosphere of a law court, or the dark satisfaction people get when a vicious criminal who has ruined people’s lives is finally caught and punished. ...

In the Bible, the word “justice” belongs closely with rescue or salvation, and so would call forth the emotion of joy. Think of the Psalms. “Let the heavens be glad,” says Psalm 96. “Let the earth rejoice. Let the sea roar and all that fills it. Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before Yahweh, for he is coming. He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.”

There are many Psalms that say the same thing. Think of Isaiah, too, including that messianic passage in chapter 11, when God equips the coming king with his own Spirit of wisdom and understanding so that “he will judge the poor with righteousness and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.” That introduces the startling prophecy of a new creation, which will abolish

the traditional hostilities in the animal kingdom. ... A similar prophecy comes later in chapter 65 within the promise of new heavens and new earth. Again, there’s a sense not just of astonishment, but of joy.

It isn’t hard to see why. Suppose you lived in a village in ancient Israel. Community life throws up many problems and disputes and apparent injustices. Rich and powerful people can easily exploit the poor, the widows, and the



N.T. WRIGHT

orphans who have nobody to stand up for them. But once in a while, the judge comes around on his regular circuit, and the people who have been oppressed or robbed of their rights or their livelihood are longing for this moment. Things will be put right at last. The whole community will heave a sigh of relief. Justice means rescue. It means celebration. It means joy. ...

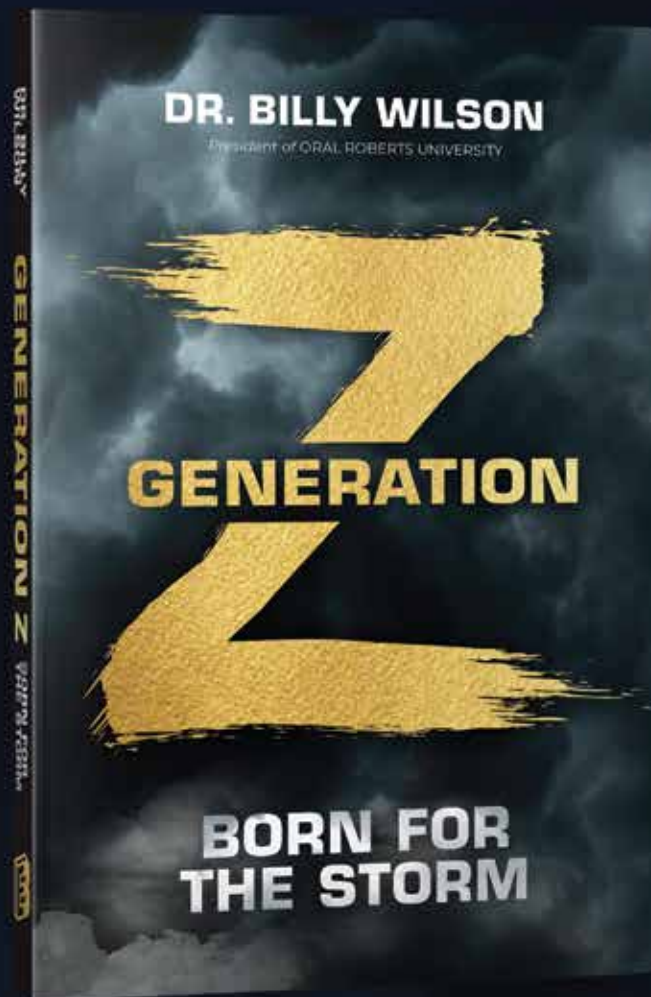
Now, these are just snapshots of the underlying biblical picture. They give us a clue not only to what people will think and feel when the Creator God finally does put things right, but also to the theological framework within which this makes sense. The God of the Bible doesn’t act at a distance. He doesn’t give instructions from a long way off while keeping his own hands clean. It seems that his reason for making this world in the first place was because he wanted — and still wants and intends — to make this world his own home. He wants to fill all creation with his glory, his love, his power, his justice. ...

Many people in Western Christianity have totally ignored this theme, because it’s routinely been taught or just assumed that the point of biblical faith is finally to leave this world and go to dwell with God in his home somewhere else. But the Bible tells the story the other way around. It’s about God coming to dwell with us, and that’s why justice is such a priority. God wants to dwell with people, and since he is the Creator, he has set things in motion so that things can be put right as far as possible in advance of his final coming when he will complete the job. He will do this work of judgment and justice not because he’s a stern moralist eager to pounce on and punish anybody who steps out of line, but because he is the good and wise Creator, who longs to see his world reflecting and finally embodying his own glory. 🙏

Photo courtesy of N.T. Wright

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