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Campus Undergoing Construction

JOHANA FLOREZ ('21)

Next year, Houghton students will be able to enjoy several newly renovated facilities around campus.

One project nearing completion is the addition of the Faith of a Mustard Seed Atrium to the Equestrian Center. Construction of this atrium began at the end of January and is expected to be completed in mid-April. Larissa Ries, the equestrian program director, explains that the space will serve as the “first location people go when arriving at the Equestrian Center, [to] check in, register for competitions, gather information or hold meetings,” as well as a comfortable lounge space for students and visitors. The atrium



Faith of a Mustard Seed atrium under construction.

COURTESY OF LARISSA STRAPELLO RIES

space was anticipated when the Equestrian Center was built in 2018, but the original anonymous donation which funded the construction did not cover the costs for fully furnishing the atrium, according to Ries. Since then, one large donation

and a number of smaller gifts funded the completion of the space, which will include a fireplace and TVs for watching indoor equestrian events.

Houghton’s Director of Athletics, Matthew Webb, says that numerous improvements to the

athletic facilities are “in the works,” either as quick projects this semester or as renovations this summer. Donors have funded new turf for portions of the baseball and softball fields, new netting and protective tarps, as well as upgraded and reorganized

equipment within the press boxes. Additionally, the college received a grant to build the KPAC KidsZone, a playground area near Burke Field. Webb calls the KidsZone “a beautiful addition to our facilities which will have great community impact.”

Paine Science Center will continue to receive upgrades according to the plans that began in the summer of 2019 to use funds raised by Houghton’s IMPACT campaign. Miriam Case, Academic Coordinator for the STEM departments, says, “There was too much to accomplish in one summer so it was planned for two, but with the closure of campus last summer we

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Houghton Holds Mental Health Awareness Weeks

VICTORIA HOCK ('23)

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, approximately 4 in 10 adults have reported having anxiety and depressive disorder symptoms during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is more than the 1 in 10 adults who reported these symptoms from the months of January to June in 2019. Adults have also reported having difficulties sleeping or eating, as well as an increase in the use of alcohol or



Wellness basket, to be awarded at the end of the week.

COURTESY OF HANNAH BAILEY

other substances, due to the pandemic.

Nuk Kongkaw, the director of the Mosaic Center, values mental health and sees how it “simultaneously impacts individuals and the relationships around us.” She also feels that “mental health is something people are realiz-

ing they can't ignore as we've spent months in isolation or limited contact with others.” The Mosaic Center, along with Residence Life, Chapel and the Center for Student Success thus held Mental Health Awareness Weeks at Houghton College from March 15th to 25th.

Several different events were held, including a talk-back on BIPOC mental health with Nuk Kongkaw, Nerissa Jones and Pierre Durant, a discussion with the Center for Student Success on how to support friends who are in crisis, a chapel talk with Dr. Mike Lastoria

entitled “Leaving Home: Right of Passage in a Virtual World,” and an introduction to the Enneagram and some other tools to help grow your self-awareness and spiritual disciplines.

Earlier in this event, a stand-up for your brother and sister event was held, along with a roundtable discussion with Rebecca Rowley, Ann Vazquez and JL Miller entitled “Am I a Bad Christian if I Struggle with Mental Health?,” a chapel talk with Pierre Durant entitled “And He Will be Called Wonderful Counselor: A Conversation on Faith, and Race” and a “Be Kind to Your Mind” workshop.

There were also a number of opportunities to win prizes throughout

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GRANT ENABLES KPAC KIDS ZONE

ELISE KOEBL ('22)

Houghton College has had its doors open to many different kinds of visitors. Whether they are prospective students, families, or friends, many have enjoyed what the college has to offer. Now, Houghton College is opening the doors wider to young children who visit with their families. Amanda Zambrano and the college have been working with the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation and KABOOM! over the past few years. “The idea grows out of the Play Everywhere Challenge through the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and KABOOM! The challenge is to transform places where children naturally gather and help them incorporate play into

their everyday lives,” said Zambrano. The KPAC KidsZone is planned to open in the triangular grassy area behind the bleachers at Burke Field during the summer alumni weekend, July 31st-August 1st.

Their first priority is, of course, safety. Zambrano stated that they plan to install fencing around the underside of the bleachers, keeping kids from playing in a dangerous space with little visibility for supervision. Zambrano also mentioned they intend to put up a “natural border” to deter kids from wandering into the parking lot.

“While I have personal interest in this project because I have little ones of my own, there were a number of factors that played into Houghton’s pursuit of this funding

opportunity. Until the playground opened by the Field of Dreams, there were only two public playgrounds in Allegany County (data courtesy of the Wilson Foundation’s State of Play report), making Allegany County children some of the most underserved children in Western New York as regards to places to play. Our children also don’t get enough outdoor play time or physical activity. Houghton providing this kind of access is an important way for us to benefit our community and the children who live here,” Zabranano said. This interest to create a playspace for children is so that children have a space to use their imaginations and play within an area their parents and families can watch them safely. ★

Comic

XKCD - Cautionary Ghost



FROM XKCD.COM/1108

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have stretched it another year.” The most noticeable changes will be completely renovated Anatomy & Physiology and Molecular & Cell biology labs. Remaining funds will help update the labs for General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, and Physical Chemistry.

Shen’s KPAC-side fire escape will be replaced out of the college budget. Between internal and external staircases, the building currently meets fire code requirements, according to Vice President for Finance Dale Wright. However, the “deteriorated” fire escape will be replaced with a covered stairwell similar to that on the Nielsen side of Shen. ★

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the event. Several students have won a free yearlong subscription to the meditation app Headspace, and a weighted blanket has also been given away. There is also a grand prize of a mental health basket to be won later in the event.

One of the hopes Kongkaw mentions she has for this event is that “in helping others care for themselves well, they would then be able to look around them, connect with others, and engage with caring for others”, further adding that “People are best equipped to help others when they have grown in their own self-awareness, know their triggers, and are willing to see their own areas of growth.” ★

Interested in Contributing to the STAR?

Just email us at star@houghton.edu! Contributing to the paper can be a great way to get experience in media and journalism or just with expressing your ideas, and as a way to be involved with the latest goings-on on campus. Even if you want to be involved but don’t feel confident in your writing abilities, get in touch! Our editors can work with you to give advice and help get your piece polished up!

SEND US YOUR HOUGHTON MEMES

The STAR is looking for the very best Houghton-related or -relevant memes to print in an upcoming issue! Send your favorites to STAR@houghton.edu for a chance to be featured!

On Safety



BY DAVID BOWERS

A couple of weeks ago, the We Are All Houghton project published an open letter in the STAR. The letter argued for some policy changes related to LGBTQ+ issues, with which I take exception. But I'm here to question some of the rhetorical language it uses, which I take to be a symptom of a deeper problem. I think the language of "safety," as it is understood in many corners of contemporary social discourse, and as it was used in the WAAH letter, acts as a kind of bait-and-switch, and betrays a lack of understanding of what is safe and what is dangerous. This lack of understanding and the associated fuzzy language throw up a smokescreen over the biggest threats humans face, crippling our ability to be truly safe.

The letter urges Houghton to "employ tangible changes in order to make LGBTQ+

students, alumni, and faculty and staff feel welcomed and safe." Surely safety is a worthy aim? It can be; but the letter fails to define what it means to be safe. In the conventional sense, safety is "the condition of being protected from danger, risk, or injury." In this sense, I stand staunchly with the LGBTQ+ community against those who would marginalize, bully, or abuse them. It was for this reason that I put my hand print on the rock last semester. But this, unfortunately, is not the sense in which the letter uses the word "safety;" this is the bait.

The letter goes on to "challenge Houghton College to... firmly acknowledge the chal-

"There is no useful correlation between feeling safe and being ultimately safe, because our hearts lie to us (Jer. 17:9)."

less of whether those feelings correspond to a reality of being safe. This is the switch.

Please don't hear me saying that feelings are bad. I think feelings are essential to the Christian life. You can't be a Christian if you don't delight in the person and work of Christ. Delight is a feeling. I've spent a good bit of my life arguing for this truth. You saw it reflected in the column I wrote in the last issue of the

good as a fire burning the house instead of the logs. There is no useful correlation between feeling safe and being ultimately safe, because our hearts lie to us (Jer. 17:9). Lots of things may feel safe that are not. Pornography, for example—even if it feels safe—is one of the most destructive forces in the modern world. We must use our minds to discern truth in scripture, with the voice of the Christian community to guide us.

So, since we're looking for truth: what does true safety mean, in the context of a Christian community? I do think there is a good way for Christians to pursue safety for ourselves and for others, in addition to the dictionary definition. The most significant danger that any human faces is hell. Christian community, at its best, is one of the most hardened defenses against that danger for its members—not, of course, in a salvific way, but as a source of accountability against sin. In this sense, Houghton ought indeed to be a safe place as together we keep each other from falling to sins which will consume our souls, whether it's pride, or pornography, or laziness, or selfishness, or sexual sin of any variety. Christians are safest when they are submitting themselves to God's word and to the loving, painful accountability of his people.

But there's another sense in which a Christian community oughtn't be safe. Christian communities ought to be the most dangerous place in the world for sin. There shouldn't be a single corner in a Christian community where sin can hide and not be found, dragged out, and killed. Sin dies in the light, but thrives in the dark. And it is that very act

of fighting sin together, even when it can feel so risky, which secures true and ultimate safety.

I will not pretend this is not sometimes a hard truth. I know the pain of Christian accountability firsthand. I could never have killed pornography in my life without the searing, burning light of Christian community. Apart from Christian community, I could not now be battling, at great cost, self-centeredness and a lack of empathy. But it's worth it, for the eternal joy ahead of me. Apart from Christian community, these sins would be killing me.

What does all this mean for our community? The Houghton community will fail its members insofar as we fail to commit to the hard work of killing sin together. The WAAH letter seems to conceive of "safety" as a pleasant emotional state or as the absence of discomfort, and implies that Christian accountability is dangerous. This simultaneously obscures the real danger we face and disarms us of one of our principal weapons against it, leaving us defenseless in a battle for our lives. I hope that the LGBTQ+ people at Houghton—many of them my friends—allow the community and the college policies to provide hard, loving accountability to them, as they do for most of us. I hope they will forgive us for the many times when our accountability has not come from a place of Christian love and support. And I hope dearly that they will continue to be a source of accountability to me as we all seek to submit our feelings to the safe scrutiny of Scripture. The battle to be holy is hard, but we need to fight it together.

David is a senior majoring in Intercultural Studies with a concentration in Linguistics.

"Christians are safest when they are submitting themselves to God's word and to the loving, painful accountability of his people."

lenges that LGBTQ+ students face on campus and provides a safe space for them to be who they are without judgment, shame, or controversy." It then advocates six "first step" policy changes that collectively would undermine Houghton's identity as a college committed to forming biblical Christians. Safety, for the authors of the letter, seems to be a matter of emotion; the human project, in their account, is to feel safe, regard-

STAR. But feelings can't float in our heads like jellyfish, stripped of anchor or guide. Feelings must be grounded in truth which does not change.

Our minds, to use another metaphor, provide the fuel for the flame of our hearts, feeding carefully-discerned truth on which our hearts burn with delight and joy. Have truth without emotion, and you're as good as a pile of firewood without a fire. Have emotion without truth, and you're as

Disagree? Have another opinion you want to share?

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Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less

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The mission of the Houghton STAR is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have been the ideals of Houghton College since its inception. This is done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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The Houghton
STAR

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Christian Political Engagement

DAVID BOWERS

In this piece, I want to think about the more explicitly political teachings in Scripture. Scripture gives plenty of broad, theological doctrines that can be applied, through the careful use of reason, to Christian political engagement, as I have done in the last two installments in this column. But it doesn't leave us with that. God, in his wisdom, has given us some specific direction about the nature and purpose of government.

The first and most important teaching in this respect is that God is the source of all authority. Jesus told Pontius Pilate, as the latter was boasting about how Jesus' fate was in his hands, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). Paul reiterated this in Rom. 13:1, writing, "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." This truth is generally accepted among Christians. But what does it really mean?

We (maybe especially those of us of a small-government bent) often take it as a kind of check on government authority. And I'm sure it's at least that. But until I started writing this piece, I hadn't considered that it has another implication for the Christian, one that, because it is an admonition to us and not just to "those dirty politicians", is more uncomfortable. If all authority is from God, then we must seriously consider that we are to submit to and even respect the government's authority as being, in a sense, God's authority. "He who rebels," Paul continues, "against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves" (Rom. 13:2). For "Don't Tread On Me" American Christians, inclined to snub the government's authority at every turn, this may be a stinging rebuke. For progressives disinclined to accept government laws that ban certain actions (ones that restrict abortion, for example, or crossing the border without documentation, or some sexual sins), this may also be painful to accept.

This leads to the second principle. Christians are to submit to the government as a form of witness to the freedom that is ours in the gospel. The key passage here is 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." Our submission is not an end in itself, but a means to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish people" who, it is implied, fail to do good by submitting to "every human institution." We testify to our freedom when we submit to the government, not out of ultimate deference to it, but out of ultimate deference to our Father. We obey, as Jesus said in Mat. 17:26, as sons, not out of compulsion. The obedience of a son to a father, out of a joyful desire to please, is a thing of beauty in a way that obedience out of compulsion is not. Christian submission to the government, then, is a form of witness to the world. It shows the gospel to be a thing

of beauty as it works itself out in our joyful submission.

A third principle controls the second: the government's authority does not allow it to command people to sin. When the government attempts to do so, Christians are responsible to disobey, even if it costs us our lives. Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and understood this. Daniel disobeyed King Nebuchadnezzar's injunction against prayer; his friends disobeyed a command to worship the king. But for God's miraculous intervention, all four would have been killed for their obedience to God. Peter (the same Peter quoted in the second principle above) and the apostles were thrown in prison for refusing to stop preaching the gospel, boldly telling the high priest—again, assuming the priesthood can be considered a kind of government—"we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Balancing the second and third principles is a matter of wisdom and discernment. It can be difficult to tell when obedience would be sin. Is it sin to turn an undocumented immigrant over to the authorities, as some churches have refused to do? On one view, to do so would be a violation of the Church's obligation to care for the poor (see, for example, Psa. 140:12). On the other view, it is possible to care for the poor without interfering with the government enforcing its laws. But then, what if the law is unbiblical? Can the Church still support its enforcement? These questions are hard, and we should debate them vigorously, but the underlying principles must be our common guide.

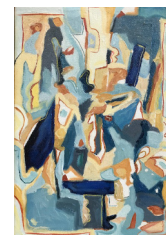
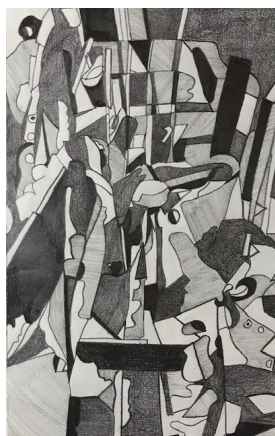
A fourth general principle is that the government exists for people's good. Paul writes in Rom. 13:4 that "[the one who is in authority] is God's servant for your good." In the Law, God commanded the governing authorities of Israel (on the arguable assumption that the priests of Israel were a kind of government) permission to enforce laws that kept people safe from physical harm and disease (Deu. 22:8, Lev. 13:4). In the opinion piece I wrote for this issue of the STAR, I talk about how safety can include safety from sin, and there are plenty of examples throughout scripture allowing and commanding governing authorities to punish sin (e.g. Rom. 13:4, "But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.").

This means that when Christians debate the merits of a given government policy (private vs. public healthcare, for example), what we should ultimately be debating is whether a given position will be good for people. Usually, conservatives advocate for privately-funded healthcare because they believe it is better for people (on a holistic view) to be self-sufficient, even if it comes at the cost of easy access to healthcare. Progressives advocate for government policies that would probably make healthcare more easily accessible, believing that people cannot be truly, substantively free if they can't be healthy. There are good things to be said for both positions.

Giving the other camp the benefit of the doubt like this allows us to debate as friends. Ultimately, we're united in our ends: conservative and progressive Christians both want people to flourish.

Artist of the Week

Caroline Oakes



About the Artist

Caroline is junior, pursuing a BFA in studio arts with a concentration in oil painting. After graduation she would love to be a freelance illustrator, but is open to exploring really any job within fine arts, particularly within the field of painting. A few of Caroline's favorite things (besides painting) include warm, sunny days spent outside, exploring new places, good food, and spending time with close friends. You can see more of her work on her Instagram @carolineoakes_art!



Our disagreement is not usually at that fundamental level. Our disagreement is usually at the level of means, where the Bible gives us more freedom. Christian political engagement, we find, has considerably more to do with discerning the proper application of biblical principles to the modern world than it does with finding proof-texts for our position. Conceived this way, our debates, vigorous though they may be, ought to be as

between allies, not opponents.

I've talked about several biblical principles that illuminate the government's proper ends and inform Christian interaction with the government. But I have not actually defined what the government is. To whom, or to what, do these principles apply in a democratic society? The next installment in this column will address this question. ★