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Letter from the Chairman

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Letter from the Chairman: Called to Live as God's People

Kendall Davis

Introduction

It's almost certainly a cliché at this point, but it's been an incredibly long year and a half for all of us. This year's fourth year class was forced to learn alongside their churches how to do ministry in the midst of a pandemic. This year's vicars will have done their entire vicarages during a pandemic. Even though we've been in-person for classes, things have still been markedly different on campus. Classrooms are socially distanced and have even been conducted online at times. The usual events that characterize the seminary calendar have been mostly gone. Even outside of the pandemic the United States has been rocked with protests and debates about racial injustice. We've endured a contentious and disputed election. Sometimes it feels like the world around us has been burning.

And in the midst of all this, the church is still here, right where Jesus has called her. I believe that in moments of change and transition, unrest and instability, or uncertainty and anxiety, the church is again pressed into asking what it means that Jesus has called her to live as his people. Christians find themselves asking what it means to follow Jesus when their neighbors are sick and dying. Churches ask themselves how they can be a trustworthy voice proclaiming the gospel when all voices seem to be distrusted and discounted. We ask ourselves what it means for us, both individually and collectively, that we have been called to live as God's people right where we are and when we are.

This year's issue of *Grapho* is offered up as a small piece of that conversation. This is by no means the beginning of this conversation, nor is it the end of it. Our hope is that these poems and articles might encourage the kind of edifying reflection and conversation described by Paul in his letter to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (3:16, ESV).

Here you'll find our writers challenge the church to consider the challenges and opportunities of living in a culturally chaotic world, as in Christian Dollar's article. Cody MacMillin critically engages with the false and hypocritical masks that Christians can hide behind and shows how Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on

the Mount points to a different way. In my own article I show how the Synoptic Gospels radically redefine popular expectations of what a messiah would be and do and thereby radically redefine what it means to be a faithful member of God's people. In Greg Moffit's exploration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's richly philosophical and theological approach to the life of the Christian, he offers us a picture of the life of the Christian as inseparable from the life of the church and the lives of both as inseparable from the life of the risen Christ. Finally our poems reflect on the witness of the scriptures and the Christian faith and what this might mean for us.

Naturally, this year's issue would never have come together were it not for the help of so many wonderful people. In particular I'd like to thank the entire Student Publications Committee which has worked tirelessly at every stage and paid meticulous attention to every detail. A big thank you is also due to our graphic designer, Jodi Huffman. I'd also like to thank our founding chairman Jordan Voges and his wife Alyson Voges for their help and guidance as I have undertaken the task of continuing this publication. Invaluable help and guidance has also come from David Lewis, David Schmitt, Ben Haupt, Tim Saleska, Travis Scholl, and Jayna Rollings. Finally, I'd like to thank all our writers for their labor and contributions to this project.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with some words from Martin Franzmann on Jesus' call to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel:

When Jesus said, "Follow Me," He was confiscating man for Himself. For that word applied to man with personal and inescapable urgency His call to repentance and His annunciation of the Kingdom come. It brought the gift and the claim of the Kingdom to bear on man. The whole Gospel of Matthew is simply the record of the process of progressive Messianic confiscation, the record of how Jesus shaped men in the mold of repentance, of how the Christ created men in his image, Christian men.¹

God's Peace,

Kendall Davis
Student Publications Chairman
St. Louis, Missouri
April 2021

Endnotes

- 1 Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 33.