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Please contact the editor with story ideas or items of interest at communications@montreat.edu. Letters are welcome.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Who am I? Why am I here? Does God have a plan for my life?

These are questions we ask ourselves throughout our lives, but particularly during the college years. There are few times in our lives when we face so many diverging paths for the future—and have the time and resources to consider them.

Coming alongside our students as they discern their calling and career is a missional priority for Montreat College. And in this issue of the magazine we consider the best ways to support students in their discernment process. We explore the importance of calling and career preparation in Christian higher education with author, educator, and administrator Drew Moser. We talk with Montreat College Associate Dean for Calling and Career Marie Wisner about the exciting work being done at Montreat’s Thrive Center. And we catch up with alumni Caroline Clark ’13 and Tim Bugg ’07 about their career journeys and the ways in which Montreat College helped set them on their current paths.

We also reprint, with permission, an article from The Gospel Coalition documenting “The Montreat Miracle" that we have witnessed in recent years.

We are still in the midst of that miracle, and we continue to be thankful for the many ways in which God is making his presence known at Montreat College. And we ask for your prayers and support as we continue to educate students through intellectual inquiry, spiritual formation, and preparation for calling and career, all to impact the world for Jesus Christ.

With gratitude,

Paul J. Maurer, Ph.D.
CALLING AND CAREER

Discussing How to Help College Students Prepare for the Future with Taylor University’s Drew Moser

By Adam Caress

Preparation for calling and career is a crucial pillar of Montreat College’s mission statement, which states that Montreat “educates students through intellectual inquiry, spiritual formation, and preparation for calling and career.” The college years provide a unique opportunity for learning, reflection, and discussion to help students discern their calling and career. And in recent years, Montreat College has spearheaded a number of initiatives to support students in their discernment process.

In 2014, Montreat launched Calling and Career Week, a biennial symposium where students engage in workshops, lectures, and discussions with thought-leaders in the field of calling and career and professional practitioners across multiple disciplines. In 2017, the college opened the Thrive Center for Learning, Calling, and Career in the L. Nelson Bell Library and has since expanded the center’s space and staff to provide students with academic support services, guidance in discerning their calling, and career development tools and training. Montreat’s academic programs have increasingly prioritized hands-on learning opportunities to help students prepare for their careers through internships, project classes, and immersion semesters.

One of the thought-leaders Montreat invited to campus for its 2018 Calling and Career Week was Taylor University Dean of Student Engagement and Associate Professor of Higher Education and Student Development Drew Moser. Moser had previously directed Taylor’s Calling and Career Office and in 2018 published the book Ready or Not: Leaning into Life in Our Twenties with his Taylor colleague Jess Fankhauser.

Moser says that one of his primary goals in writing Ready or Not was to dispel the myths that many college students face. “Students are bombarded with two competing messages right now that are both maybe partially true, but mostly false,” he explains. “The first is to live it up while they can, and just have as much fun and adventure as they can before they have to settle down and be a boring ‘adult.’ And I think social media feeds this by promoting an Instagram mindset—this leads to that ‘FOMO’ that we see, the fear of missing out.”

“IF YOU HAVE A VIEW THAT GOD CARES ABOUT ALL OF YOU—YOUR WHOLE BEING, YOUR WHOLE PERSONHOOD—THEN WORK IS JUST ONE ASPECT ALONGSIDE THESE OTHER REALLY IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS SUCH AS YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE, YOUR CHURCH LIFE, YOUR COMMUNITY LIFE, AND YOUR FAMILY LIFE.”
“The other message that I think we see, especially in Christian colleges, is to figure out your life as quickly as possible. There’s this false belief that everyone else has it figured out, so you need to, as well. This is more the ROI, or ‘return on investment’ idea. What we try to do in the book is say, ‘Hey, your twenties aren’t meant to be simply a thrill ride. There’s more to life than that. But also, you’re not expected to figure out every aspect of your life by the time you graduate. Very few people do. There’s a middle way here, and that’s what we think of as the way of vocation.’”

Moser is sensitive to the way that these myths can cause stress among college students. In his work with students over the years, he learned that the idea of God’s calling was very important to them. “But in many ways, that importance shows itself in their lives as stress or anxiety or pressure to get it right,” he says. “So they carry a lot of pressure and expectation.”

Part of that expectation has to do with our culture’s idolizing of the “American Dream,” which is often reduced to a focus on material wealth and career success. According to Moser, the Christian vision of vocation is much broader and deeper than that. “If you have a view that God cares about all of you—your whole being, your whole personhood—then work is just one aspect alongside these other really important dimensions such as your spiritual life, your church life, your community life, and your family life,” he explains. “Career is one piece of the overall puzzle of your vocation, as opposed to outside of Christian contexts, where often the only way in which you consider vocation is in your career. For instance, I’m not just an employee of Taylor University, I’m also a husband and a father, so I have a calling to be faithful to my family. I’m also a member of my church, so I’m called to invest in that faith community. I’m a resident in my local community, so I’m called to be a good citizen in my town. And most importantly, I’m a child of God and a being in Christ, so I’m called to intentionally and faithfully live that out. So our overall vocation is really this broader picture of how these dimensions work together, integrate, and intersect to reveal a picture of how one is living this biblical idea of ‘the good life.’”

“The good life” is a phrase with deep roots that date all the way back to pre-Christian Greek philosophy. But Moser is quick to point out that the biblical vision of the good life is unique. “I don’t think a biblical view of the good life means success in the eyes of the world, or riches in the eyes of the world, or even as much happiness as possible. I view the good life from the biblical concept of ‘shalom,’ which we kind of crudely and loosely translate from the Hebrew as ‘peace’ in English, but it really means ‘flourishing.’ And this flourishing is in the terms of our right relationship with God, with ourselves and who we are, right relationship with others, and then right relationship with God’s creation. So I think the good life is intentionally and faithfully living in right relationship with those spheres. That’s a good aim for our vocation, no matter what we do.”

Moser considers himself an unlikely vessel for wisdom about calling and career. “There’s an old adage: ‘You teach what you need,’” he says, laughing. “[Ready or Not] is the book or resource that I wish I had when I was in my twenties, because my twenties were marked by a lot of confusion and anxiety, wondering about where I should be going, what I was supposed to be doing.”

Growing up in tiny Gridley, Illinois—population 1,300—Moser began to take his Christian faith seriously in high school. “At my church, we had a lot of high-schoolers that ended up going to Taylor University [in Indiana],” he recalls. “I really looked up to them and thought, ‘Hey, they’re coming back different—in a good way.’ So I visited some of my friends there when I was in high school, and it ended up being the only college that I applied to, so I’m glad that I got in.”
While at Taylor, Moser felt a call to ministry. “My assumption was that I would go into church ministry, so I went to seminary [at Denver Seminary] and got a job at a church,” he says. “It was a really good experience, but it became clear pretty quickly that, ‘Hey, maybe I’m wired for another type of ministry. Church ministry might not be the best spot for me.’ And then I started thinking, ‘Okay, could I either go into more of a missions route or an academic route?’"

Moser and his wife, Rebecca, tried the missions route first. “We went to Vancouver, British Columbia, with a group that was similar to a YWAM [Youth with a Mission] model where you would have a training school followed by outreach, but the training and outreach were all in the same area,” he recalls. But the mission field wasn’t an ideal fit, either. “I realized, ‘Okay, I really like the teaching, training aspect, and that’s where I feel like I come alive and some of my best strengths and skills are utilized,’ which eventually led me towards a higher education path.”

At this point, God began to open up a door into higher education. “When I was out in Vancouver, I got a call from a friend at Taylor who said, ‘Hey, we’ve got an opening in residence life and I was wondering if you’d be interested.’ I had never considered residence life before but felt like I needed to at least explore it— if nothing else to be polite to my alma mater and to my friend. And then at every step of the way, in a way that didn’t really make sense to me on paper, I just found I couldn’t say no. And because I couldn’t say no, I realized, ‘We really need to consider this.’ After a lot of thought and prayer, my wife and I felt we should say yes to this offer.”

“IT BECAME CLEAR THAT STUDENTS HAD THESE DEEP AND COMPLEX AND FRAUGHT QUESTIONS REGARDING GOD’S CALL ON THEIR LIVES.”

After three years as a residence hall director, Moser moved into Taylor’s Calling and Career Office, where he began to find his own calling in helping students navigate theirs. “I started meeting with students and realizing that a lot of the typical career services appointments that I was having—résumé reviews, mock interviews, networking connections, those sorts of things—many of them ended up being more about this idea of calling,” he says. “And it became clear that students had these deep and complex and fraught questions regarding God’s call on their lives. I realized, ‘My role in this office can’t just be about the career services. That’s important, but there’s a deeper conversation that we need to have.’ That’s when we really started leaning into this idea of vocation and trying to figure out how to help our students navigate God’s call for their life while at college. We started doing a lot of research and thinking and...
“I THINK IT’S IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS TO UNDERSTAND CAREER IN A WAY IN WHICH YOU ARE SEEKING TO GLORIFY GOD AND ACTIVELY LIVING OUT A SENSE OF CALLING FROM GOD.”

asking around about how to best help college students navigate calling.”

Being at a Christian institution, the exploration of calling and career looked a lot different from a secular institution, integrating calling and a career in a way that emphasized students’ ultimate calling. “I think it’s important for Christians to understand career in a way in which you are seeking to glorify God and actively living out a sense of calling from God,” Moser explains. “And so I think it’s really important for the Christian to understand that if you feel called or you’re being called, there has to be a caller. And that caller is God. It’s really a lifelong process of living with God, in relationship with Him, especially in your career.”

In November 2018, Moser came to Montreat College’s campus to lead a keynote session—along with his Ready or Not co-author Jess Fankhauser—for Montreat’s Calling and Career Week symposium. Their talk was titled “Fully Present, Fully Prepared” and focused on unpacking Romans 12:1-2:

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (NIV)

Moser was able to share with Montreat students the wisdom he has learned through years of working with and researching college students. “It wasn’t until I got into this work and research on college students and vocation that I suddenly saw Romans 12:1-2 in a new light,” he told Montreat’s students. “Here you have Paul referencing sacrificial system that, in the Old Testament, often required sacrificing things to show your devotion to God. But here in this passage, he upends that sacrificial system in a really important way. He says that your best offering is your body as a living and holy sacrifice. But he provides a few qualifiers of what this looks like… We need to have resistance to some things and acceptance of other things.”

“First, don’t copy the behaviors of this world. That’s not authentic; imitation is lazy. Authenticity requires sacrifice. Second, ‘be transformed.’ Paul tells us to let God transform us into a new person by changing the way we think... Because we are living sacrifices, I don’t think this is a one-time deal. I think this is a lifelong process of offering ourselves to God. When we do that, then we can know God’s will. Then we know his plan for us is good, pleasing, and is perfect. And we need wisdom to see how this works practically in our lives and on a college campus. We want to find shortcuts, but what we truly need is wisdom.”

Throughout the talk, Moser was able to explore the different themes that have become central to his work and research: his expansive definition of “shalom;” his emphasis on the need for quiet and reflection; and his belief that the concept of calling is applicable in our spiritual, church, family, and community lives, as well in our careers. In his closing, he encouraged Montreat’s students to be fully present during their college years as they prepare for the future.

“You’re in a really important time to discover who you are,” he said. “Scripture has some really profound things to say about who you are as a created being in God’s universe. I would encourage you to explore those. Use them to counter the messages in your heads that tell you that you’re not good enough or smart enough or that you don’t have what it takes. God has some powerful things in store for you.”

Adam Caress ’18 is director of communications at Montreat College.
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THE THRIVE CENTER IS A REALLY BIG PART OF THE COLLEGE’S STRATEGY FOR PREPARING STUDENTS FOR CALLING AND CAREER.
Reflection: As Montreat College’s associate dean for calling and career, one of your primary responsibilities is running the college’s Thrive Center for Learning, Calling, and Career. Can you talk a little bit about what the Thrive Center does?

Marie Wisner: The shortened version of the Thrive Center’s mission statement is that we exist to educate students for academic success and to lead purposeful lives. We do this primarily through academic support and calling and career development, providing distinct services in both of those areas. We have an academic support specialist, Beth Maslin, and a career development specialist, Michelle Pupoh. I get to work with both of them and we’re all working together to think about the program. We also provide guidance for students looking to participate in off-campus programs and interdisciplinary majors. And we facilitate the biennial Calling and Career Week Symposium, which is focused on conversations and discussions about the integration of our faith and our work, helping students explore the idea of calling and how we understand that within a biblical framework.

Under academic support, Beth runs a program with about 20 peer tutors called “academic fellows,” and they receive training on how to help coach students in the subject area that they have expertise in. These are students who are really excellent in their coursework and demonstrate the personal skills to be able to help others along the way. We also offer academic skills workshops on reading, note taking, test taking, stress reduction, and other related skills.

And the other main focus of the Thrive Center is calling and career development?

Yes. There are a lot of places on Montreat’s campus where calling and career development happens, not just in the Thrive Center. But the Thrive Center is a really big part of the college’s strategy for preparing students for calling and career. We work with students on identity development, helping them work through questions like, “What am I good at? What do I want to do? People have always told me that I should do this, but I’m not sure that’s what I want to do. How do I know?” So both of our staff are certified in using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, using the Clifton Strengths Finder, and then Michelle is also certified in using the Strong Interest Inventory. All of those instruments provide different pieces of information that the students can use to describe themselves to others as they are seeking opportunities. And it also helps them have a sense of, “This is what I want to do, and this is what I don’t want to do.” We’re also trying to help students see how their faith and their spiritual life is a part of who they are as a whole, and to see whole person development as part of their planning for their future. The beautiful outcome would be if we’re not even having to talk about how you integrate your faith and your career path, it just is happening, and they’re not seen as separate to begin with.

What are some of the steps you work through with students to help them with career development?

We’ve tried to frame the idea of a career path with some road signs. I think all of us at different times in our lives will circle back from one point to another—we understand that it’s not necessarily a linear path. But we begin where our students generally are when they arrive at college, with identity development. We then want to help them identify experiences that they can engage in that might really help explore a career path that they’re curious about. An informational interview with someone who’s doing a job they think that they might want to do gives them a lot of information. Job shadowing, where they spend a little bit more time with someone, allows
them to observe what’s going on in that person’s work and the industry they are in. Practicums or internships are a logical next step, where students are doing hands on work and helping really produce the work of that organization. We want students to have lots of different kinds of experiences throughout their career preparation journey, so that they can try on things and say, “I like the idea of that, but in reality it’s not what I really expected.” And then in other cases they might equally be surprised and think, “Oh, I didn’t know that I would enjoy this so much.”

Another important tool that the Thrive Center uses is Handshake, an online career center platform that connects our students with hundreds of thousands of organizations. Most of our students come from this region and are looking for jobs here, so we certainly reach out to organizations in this region, but Handshake can also connect them to any place in the world and gives employers exposure to Montreat College, its mission, and the students who are being trained here.

We also try to help our students understand why networking and relationships are so important. Putting yourself out there like that can sound really intimidating to our students, especially for those students who wouldn’t be inclined to initiate a contact or take a first step to meet someone new. We try to teach them that networking is really about creating a relationship with someone that can be authentic and genuine and doesn’t have to be fake or purely transactional. We want our students see that whenever they say “yes” to an opportunity to get to know someone better, it can build relationships and help open doors for them.

**What kinds of career preparation skills does the Thrive Center help students to cultivate?**

In general, we want the career coaching conversations in the Thrive Center to help our students understand that, while they are working on developing a distinct set of skills in relation to their major, they also need to be working on a set of skills that are universal and that all employers want no matter what kind of role they’re hiring for. These are called “soft skills,” but not because they’re easy. It’s because skills like leadership and communication are hard to measure and define and quantify.

We try to help students see how their everyday involvement on campus—whether it’s athletics, or student government, or as a resident assistant, or working with the Aramark staff in the dining center and facilities—those experiences are helping them develop those skills that are most wanted by employers. We want to help them articulate those experiences so that they can connect the dots for the employers, particularly in interviews. Because the kinds of questions they’re going to start with are often like, “Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem.” Or, “Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a coworker. How did you resolve that?” We help them see how the soft skills they’ve been practicing throughout college are really going to be the substance of their answers in the interview process.

So it is quite a journey. Our students might be applying for an internship or they might be applying for a job. But we want to help them at whatever stage they’re at. That’s the heart of what we’re trying to do with our career development, and the calling piece is threaded throughout. You know, I said the Thrive Center’s purpose statement is educating students for academic success and to lead purposeful lives, and that’s because they’re whole people. They’re not just going to be what their work is. And through our career coaching as well as our academic coaching we want to really see who is this person in front of us. They’re created in God’s image, so how do we help them see that and appreciate that and find connection with the kinds of work and the kinds of people that would be meaningful to them.
Along those lines, how is the work that the Thrive Center does different from a similar office at a secular campus?

I think the conversations we have with students here in the Thrive Center at Montreat would be really difficult to have in a non-faith-based institution or with staff that perceive our purpose and origins differently.

In our office, we start with the assumption that we are created, and we are created in God’s image. And we can take from that that we have good things in us and that God has created us with purpose. Going back to Genesis, the simple understanding is that God created humanity and He gave us purposeful, meaningful work to do. So I think recognizing that work is a good part of God’s creation and that we were created not only to be in relationship with Him and with other people, but also to be in relationship with our surroundings. Being grounded in those principles and assumptions shapes the way that we talk to our students. It shapes our love and our hearts for the students in wanting them to have a sense of calling.

And calling—it’s hard to qualify or quantify what calling is. There are really individual kinds of callings because God’s made us uniquely and gifted each of us with a different constellation of strengths. Our personality and all the other life experience we’ve had—our family background and opportunities and God’s presence and the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives—all shape us pretty uniquely. But we’re also helping our students know that they’re called to Someone, with a capital S, really called to God. And we all have that calling. We all respond differently, perhaps, but we all have that calling to Someone first. And then, as we respond to that call to God who knows us by name, we’re trying to do the most right thing as we discern that in a listening relationship with God.
“ANYONE COULD SEE THAT MONTREAT WOULD HAVE TO CLOSE—AND SOON. BUT IT DIDN’T.”
FIVE YEARS AGO, Montreat College in North Carolina was in serious trouble.

“The cost of educating students is more than what tuition provides,” Interim President Joe Kirkland told the Asheville Citizen-Times. Students couldn’t afford higher tuition. Government aid was down. And costs kept going up.

As a result, expenses outweighed income by $300,000 in 2011 alone—significant in a budget of about $20 million. In 2012, the college laid off 29 full-time employees. In four years, enrollment plunged from 757 (2009) to 443 (2013).

Montreat’s situation wasn’t unusual. Undergraduate enrollment in America has fallen for six straight years, due largely to a drop in the birth rate, a recovering economy, and prices that have gone up almost 400 percent in the last 30 years.

Without the resources or prestige of larger schools, small private schools have been hit especially hard. Enrollment at degree-granting colleges with fewer than 1,000 students dropped by 5 percent from 2010 to 2016; about 11 private colleges have closed each of the last three years.

Increasingly desperate, Montreat looked into merging with Point University in Georgia. But it wasn’t a good fit—the schools weren’t closely aligned theologically; programs would have to merge; Montreat’s residential campus would likely need to close. Montreat’s faculty voted “no confidence” in its Board of Trustees; Point’s board voted against the merger altogether.

Anyone could see that Montreat would have to close—and soon.

But it didn’t.

Today, after four straight years of growing enrollment, Montreat has 538 traditional undergraduate students on the main campus, up from 385 in 2014. The residential campus has run out of room; dozens of students are bunking at nearby conference centers. In the past three years, Montreat has hired more than 13 new full-time (and 26 part-time) faculty and staff. And 20 renovation or new construction projects—including a $2.7 million athletic complex—have been completed.

Part of the renewal comes from a $6 million anonymous donation in 2014; part comes from a hot new major—cybersecurity—that Montreat jumped ahead on.

And part of it comes from President Paul Maurer’s push to get the college back on mission.

“We reinserted [biblical] infallibility back into statement of faith—it had been removed about a decade earlier,” Maurer said. “Our first priority was to clarify our Christ-centered identity. It was a higher priority than finding money.”

Mountain Retreat

The town of Montreat (population 760) grew out of a conference center dreamed up by a Congregationalist pastor from Connecticut. He wanted a place for Christians to study and worship and rest together—a “mountain retreat.”

His property and retreat center was sold to Presbyterians in 1907, who soon thought to add heat to the buildings and use them year-round as a school. This early version of Montreat College was for women only, training them to be teachers. (In 1959, men were admitted; today, 51 percent of Montreat students are male.)

The landscape is beautiful, and proved a magnet to retiring missionaries. L. Nelson Bell came to Montreat after 24 years of missionary work in China; his daughter Ruth Bell enrolled at Montreat for her last year of high school. (Montreat was a finishing school and junior college then.)
Ruth married Billy Graham in the college chapel, and Billy and Ruth lived in town until tourists peeping in the windows prompted them to move a few miles up the winding road. Their son Franklin graduated from Montreat College; Ruth sat on the board for nine years and raised money for the Dr. L. Nelson Bell Library.

But even famous alumni and board members couldn’t lift Montreat’s fortunes.

“‘WE DON’T GIVE OUR MONEY TO MAKE THINGS WORK.’ SHE SAID, ‘WE GIVE OUR MONEY BECAUSE GOD SAYS TO GIVE IT.’”

Hard Times

Montreat isn’t a stranger to difficulty—in fact, they’re pretty good friends. Money has always been tight. Enrollment has never been high enough. And in 2003, its president of two months resigned after soliciting sex online from a 13-year-old girl.

“I’ve been here since 1974,” said English Professor Don King. “There have been a lot of hard times. But [the spring of 2014] was one of the hardest.”

Negotiations with Point had fallen through. The future was so bleak that the board hadn’t bothered to look for a replacement president after Dan Struble resigned in spring 2013.

“With no good options for moving forward with viability, and a high likelihood the college could close in the near term, the situation was dire,” Maurer wrote.

Then Adjunct Instructor Jerry Lewis, who was also pastor of nearby Grace Community Church, emailed a couple who came to his church while on a family sabbatical to the area in 2012.

“We had plans to save money to build a new preschool and children’s space, and upon their departure, they reached out and said they wanted to help,” Lewis said. “That’s the only way I knew they had means, because their help in our context was significant.”

Lewis “felt the Lord leading me to ask them” about Montreat, but he didn’t want to, worried that the family might be irritated at his presumption or, even worse, pull their financial support of Grace Community.

“I argued with God back and forth for a few weeks, then said, ‘I can’t fight him anymore,’” Lewis said. After talking to the college, he emailed the couple.

He told them Montreat was in trouble. He told them it was the last CCCU member left in North Carolina. He asked if maybe they could help.

Within an hour they emailed back, telling him they had just come into extra money and were wondering what to do with it.

Over six weeks, Lewis emailed and talked with the couple. As he learned more about Montreat’s issues, he grew worried. “What if this doesn’t work?” he asked them. What if, even with their support, the school still closes?

“The wife said to me, ‘We don’t give our money to make things work,’” Lewis remembers. “She said, ‘We give our money because God says to give it.’”

Without ever stepping foot on campus, the couple pledged $6 million to Montreat.

Presidental Search

Energized and hopeful, the trustees launched a presidential search.

But even with the $6 million pledge, Maurer was less than enthusiastic about Montreat’s chances. He knew Christian higher education. By then, he had worked for 15 years—with jobs including capital campaign director, dean of adult and graduate studies, and president—in five different CCCU schools.

So he knew the right questions to ask. He knew the right numbers to look up. He knew the right indicators—and the wrong ones.

Undergraduate enrollment was at 300; adult graduate students were at 400. The school needs 1,500 to generate enough income to sustain itself.

But the campus is built to house 500. If you get more students, you need to buy more land and build more facilities, which costs more money. So in attracting students to relieve the financial crisis, you create another financial crisis.

“I am not running toward this,” Maurer told the search firm when they called again. “I am running away, and I am running away fast.”

“Just come down for a lunch,” they said. Mindful of future opportunities with the
search firm, he went. They surprised him with a full board interview; a few days later he was voted president.

“At that point, [my wife] Joellen said, ‘Maybe we need to pay attention to this,’” Maurer said. “We discerned over those next few weeks that perhaps God’s fingerprints were on this. If, in fact, this is of the Lord, how dare we say no?”

Living in a Miracle

It took Maurer two years to figure out he wasn’t trying to turn things around at Montreat.

“Turnaround, turnaround, turnaround was all I ever talked about,” he said. Until one day a venture capitalist told him he didn’t want to do that.

“A turnaround implies you’re returning to some former glory days,” he told Maurer. But Montreat didn’t have any—it had always been in survival mode. So Maurer quit reading about turnarounds and started learning about entrepreneurship.

“We’re a 103-year-old start-up,” he says now. It’s a weird place for a college to be in, and in some ways, exactly right. “We have been forced to think” about the model, Maurer said. “It’s exactly what higher education is missing.”

“In my observation, a lot of schools ought to think about ‘grow or die’ as crisis management,” he said. “But they don’t have the catalyst of a near-death experience. We have that. It was honestly probably the best thing to happen to this college in 50 years. Then everyone gets it—we have to change.”

But not just change for change’s sake.

Community Covenant

Maurer’s first priority was to clarify the school’s values and mission. And in some ways, that wasn’t new or unusual.

“We’ve always had a mission statement, and it was usually updated every time a new president came,” King said. “What is different now is we have a community covenant, which moves beyond theological affirmations to focusing on lifestyle decisions.”

The covenant isn’t long—a little less than 1,200 words, including footnotes. There are eight commitments, including showing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, upholding the “God-given worth of every human being, from conception to death,” and affirming “chastity among the unmarried and the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman.”

Those positions aren’t popular, especially in higher education.

“Montreat College sparks turmoil by making teachers sign pledge opposing same-sex marriage, abortion,” the Charlotte Observer reported. “Students and staff to leave Montreat College over ‘covenant’ given to staff,” ABC local affiliate WLOS said. “Private College Mandates Staff Signs Document Opposing Gay Marriage,” the Associated Press announced.

“We were extremely grateful [the media attention] only lasted 30 days,” Maurer said. “It was hot and not fun.”

Around the same time, Montreat chose not to renew its membership with the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities—a group of PC(USA) schools. Through the years, as the denomination grew more liberal, most of the college staff stayed conservative.

“When I went for my M.Div., I was under the care of a PC(USA) presbytery,” Maurer said. “I saw myself under the rule of a denomination that had left biblical orthodoxy, and I didn’t get ordained.” (He currently attends Lewis’s Southern Baptist congregation.)

Maurer knew that, like him, “conservative evangelicals would distrust the idea of us being a conservative, biblically orthodox school” if they had a PC(USA) label.

So Montreat publicly dropped the affiliation, switching instead to independent, because “we knew we had to be trusted by evangelicals.”

Cybersecurity Focus

As crucial as clarifying Montreat’s Christian identity was, the college also had to grow enrollment—and fast.

“The way to grow is to make your academic product better and better,” Maurer said.

“Our vision is to be rooted as liberal arts and Christian. But also, because we’re American, and we exist in a global economy, we decided to go hard into STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math].”

When Maurer arrived, Montreat already had a minor in cybersecurity. His first year, it became a major. His second year, he noticed that cybersecurity issues were on the front page of The New York Times three or four times a week.

“EVERY CYBER PROGRAM IN AMERICA TEACHES STUDENTS HOW TO BE OFFENSIVE HACKERS. WHEN YOU TEACH A STUDENT TO DO THAT, THEY’D BETTER HAVE A MORAL COMPASS, BECAUSE EVERY CYBER FRONTLINE PROFESSIONAL IN THE WORLD HAS THE KEYS TO YOUR KINGDOM.”
“I thought, *We’ve got something here,*” he said.

Maurer hired a lobbyist who had worked in the second Bush administration. “The theory was that the federal government could help us scale our program,” he said. “Government money doesn’t scare me, as long as we retain control of our mission and hiring.”

He started visiting Capitol Hill every 60 days, meeting with elected officials, with personnel at the Pentagon, with staff at “multiple three-letter agencies.”

“Every cyber program in America teaches students how to be offensive hackers,” Maurer told them. “When you teach a student to do that, they’d better have a moral compass, because every cyber frontline professional in the world has the keys to your kingdom.”

Ethics, then, is enormously important in the technology classroom. And what better place to learn it than a Christian liberal arts college?

His message went over huge—in the past two years, Maurer has done roundtables on the topic with policy people in Washington, D.C., financial and energy professionals in Charlotte, and technology leaders in Seattle.

In fall 2017, Montreat became the fourth school in North Carolina—and the first in the CCCU—to earn recognition from the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security for excellence in cyber defense education.

Second Miracle

When Kelli Burgin began teaching at Montreat three years ago, there were fewer than a dozen cybersecurity majors in the entire college. In fall 2017, that was up to 50. This fall, it was 70.

Burgin and her colleagues “talk to students about ethics a lot—why we do what we do. We have a legal responsibility, but also an ethical responsibility to do things the right way.”

“The right way” means honoring God by prioritizing people.

Cyber defense can mean protecting people from having their identity stolen, from having their business system shut down, from being seduced by an online trafficker. Montreat graduates have gone on to work for the government, for financial institutions, and for health-care systems.

“I had an incoming student who said, ‘I know we’re commanded to love our neighbor, and I really would like to be able to lay down my life for my friends. I think this is one way I can do that,’” Burgin said. “We have a lot of students who feel that way.”

“We’re talking about strategies to help defend real people, and how we integrate our faith into work,” she said. “We always go back to God’s Word.”

Montreat’s emphasis on moral cybersecurity has been a second miracle for the school.

In fall 2015, it held a regional cybersecurity conference for 70 people. Last fall, more than 400 came, including 150 prospective students and parents. The college is working on formal partnerships in the defense and intelligence communities.

Already, the small campus is packed. All cybersecurity students also need to take liberal arts classes—so the parking lots are overflowing, the dorms are full, and faculty are investigating storage rooms to see if they can be turned into additional classrooms.

Montreat isn’t talking about closing anymore. Instead, the buzz is about a piece of property 10 minutes away, and the $400 million to $500 million they’ll need to develop it into a main campus.

Energy is building among staff, students, and donors—including the original, anonymous couple, whose gift of $6 million has grown to $10 million.

“There is momentum,” CCCU president Shirley Hoogstra said. “All of Montreat’s history and legacy gives them a solid foundation to build on, and in Paul [Maurer] they have a leader with courage and communication skills. They can take off the lid.”

Hand of God

It’s been a busy four years. “I’ve never worked harder or faster,” Maurer said.

Because as any ancient Israelite will tell you, a miraculous rescue from one dark place does not mean your troubles are over.

“Think about the blind beggar Bartimaeus,” Maurer said. “He got his sight back, so he had to go find a job or beg with sight, which would have been harder. Think about Lazarus—he had to die again. Think about any miracle in all of Scripture and ask yourself the question, “What was the purpose of that miracle?”

It wasn’t to make people’s lives easier.

Always, the answer was to glorify God, to give people the opportunity to say, “God is great,” he said.

And that has “an enormous impact on morale.”

Every time he tells the story, “there’s an audible response from whomever he’s talking to,” said executive director of marketing and communications Sara Baughman. “Hearing the miracle story is part of what attracted me to this place. I felt like God’s provision and hand was here.”

She’s not the only one—the faculty and staff at Montreat are “extraordinarily committed” because “we feel God is at work here,” Maurer said. “And every day here, we have not lost sight—and by God’s grace, we’ll never lose sight—that we are living in a miracle.”

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra is senior writer for The Gospel Coalition.
UPCOMING FALL & WINTER EVENTS

Join us at the following Montreat College events:

RETR3AT Cybersecurity Conference
Homecoming & Family Weekend
Giving Tuesday
Christmas Concert

October 4
October 11-12
November 26
TBD

Visit montreat.edu/calendar to view all upcoming event information.

Support the Cavs! For a full list of athletic events, visit: montreatcavaliers.com.
“I think discerning our calling is about asking the question, ‘What are we doing in the world?’ That’s the calling piece for me. It’s about changing lives.”
For Caroline Clark, discovering her calling as an educator did not come through a grand epiphany. Rather, it was present throughout her life, a quiet whisper through all her years of growing up. As a fourth generation teacher, it was just something that ran in her blood. Developing that career to match her calling, though, was more of a journey.

Clark attended a large high school near Atlanta, Ga. When she began the search for colleges, she had one requirement: it had to be bigger than her high school. But that requirement shifted when she was introduced to Montreat College. Like many other students, it was athletics that brought her to the cove. She had been flirting with offers from other institutions, but when those fell through, she found herself reluctantly accepting a recruiting invitation from the women’s soccer team to visit Montreat.

“My dad received a phone call from a previous soccer coach at Montreat and I just didn’t want to hear it,” she says. “Sure enough though, when I came, it turned into an overwhelming ‘yes.’ The biggest thing I remember is when I went with some of the current players to visit the field. I looked up and saw the mountains and I remember thinking how that was the craziest thing, to be playing soccer and have this mountain view around me. It was definitely love at first sight.”

Once she arrived, Clark blossomed in the Montreat College atmosphere. She was able to test her limits socially and artistically. During her four years, she was involved as an athlete, a Fellowship of Christian Athletes leader, and a residence assistant. And she was also able to cultivate a creative passion through music.

“While at Montreat, I was pursuing a minor in music and I graduated with that,” she recalls. “I was involved in choir and orchestra, mainly. My freshman year at Montreat, I heard the choir, tried out with the former director, and was able to sing in it. It wasn’t my original plan, and I never thought I would have the opportunity to be able
“I never thought I would have the opportunity to be able to do all the things I loved at one time. That was a gift. Sometimes, when you’re an athlete, that’s it. There are no minors or extracurricular activities. You think that’s all you get to do and are supposed to do, so being able to practice and appreciate music in college was a special surprise for me.”

While she was busy outside of the classroom, she was busy being tested in it as well. Clark found unexpected challenges in reconciling faith and learning and had to discover for herself what it meant to live in a context where they were integrated.

“Because I grew up in a public school, I hadn’t had faith and school together,” she says. “My faith was strong, but I would never have connected it with learning as much as I did had I not been at Montreat. I was learning and truly understanding that every single breath and every single thing I do and learn is supposed to be honoring to God. I was applying faith to my academics and learned that they are all the same and all connected. I don’t think I had a faith that was just on Sundays, but I missed out on many mission opportunities on the soccer field before I came to Montreat. I wish I had been more confident in my faith and in myself and had been able to love on the girls I played soccer with. Montreat was a really big factor in connecting my faith and my everyday life, and I’m so thankful for that.”

She did not go through this transformation alone. Clark credits much of her growth to the professors and mentors that taught her while she was at Montreat. Her worldviews class with Professor Brad Daniel expanded her theological horizons and introduced her to other cultures and religions. Her education professors gently warned and prepared her for the challenges of her future career. But
just as she was growing as a person, student, and Christian, Montreat College itself was also experiencing growing pains.

“When I was a senior, the college was going through that period where there was the threat of closing,” she recalls. “The Elementary Education, Worship Arts, and Music programs all were negatively affected. Those were all my departments, so it was disheartening. But it’s amazing how peaceful it remained despite the uncertainty. I still got my degrees and we were just always moving forward. God made it happen so now I think, ‘What can we do to keep moving forward?’”

To help move the college and its ministry forward, Caroline serves as the head of the college’s Alumni Leadership Council. The Leadership Council serves at college events, supports the college, and is a networking source for students. The eventual dream is for there to be a leader for every class that invites their respective class to attend events like Homecoming.

Caroline can see the ways Montreat College has moved forward from when she was a student. “It’s exciting to see more kids on campus,” she says. “My favorite thing is when I hear students enjoying some of the same things I did that changed my life. It makes me emotional. When I hear that those things still happen, it gives me chills. I think the growth vision is not to take away the feeling of liberal arts, but to encourage people to be leaders. There are fewer and fewer schools like Montreat, and for someone who needs it like I needed it, if Montreat goes away, what are they going to do?”

Since she graduated in 2013, Clark has called Western North Carolina home. She accepted a job at Black Mountain Elementary School in 2014, and she and her husband Spencer—also a Montreat alum—live in nearby Swannanoa. She is finishing out her fifth year at Black Mountain Elementary teaching fifth grade. According to Clark, she has never stopped learning since she graduated.

“It’s almost like you re-learn lessons that you learned in college but in a different way,” she says. “It’s been hard, but that’s what my education prepared me for. I’m always learning and growing. I think that sometimes when you are in college you just can’t wait to graduate and be done. But the world is hard and people can be mean. I think discerning our calling is about asking the question, ‘What are we doing in the world?’ That’s the calling piece for me. It’s about changing lives.”

Clark internalizes this question for herself and answers it through her community presence. In November of 2018, she was recognized by Asheville’s WLOS ABC 13 news station as a special “Thanks to Teachers” award recipient, a weekly segment that highlights a notable teacher in the area. She says she still does not know the parent who nominated her, but feels honored to have someone do that for her.

In every aspect of her life, Clark’s aim is to live out her calling to love others as God commands through her actions in her career.

“We really impact other people, and what we do and say can make a difference, whether it’s a ten-year-old’s life or a college student’s life or an older person’s life,” she says. “We’re all looking for the same thing—we want to be known and loved for who we are. Sometimes, we’re able to explain the Gospel explicitly, but in my field that can be tricky. It’s witnessing, but not just with our words, but with our day-to-day life by caring about other people and taking your mind off yourself and putting them first. These fifth graders can go through heavy stuff at this age and are at a very pivotal time in their lives. They are figuring things out and I can have really deep conversations with some of them. This world’s not getting any easier. So, if I can love on these little minds, maybe it can help them.”

“MY FAVORITE THING IS WHEN I HEAR STUDENTS ENJOYING SOME OF THE SAME THINGS I DID THAT CHANGED MY LIFE.”

Emily Wells ’20 is a communication major at Montreat College.
“I BELIEVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY THAT GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EVERYONE, AND HE DIRECTS EVERYONE INTO WHAT SUCCESSES THEY CAN HAVE.”
NEVER A DOUBT

A Conversation with Tim Bugg ’07 on Business and Faith

By Anastasia Howland

Tim Bugg has always believed in God. “We all are sinners at heart, and we know that. We all stray from the path more times than any of us will ever admit,” he says. “But I’ve never not believed.”

Growing up in Asheville, N.C., as a Native American who was adopted at birth by white parents, Tim never experienced his biological ancestors’ way of life. “My parents are extremely loving people…but I was never brought up in a native culture, so I don’t really know what it’s like to be Native American,” he explains. “I wouldn’t say it’s a hurdle, but just not having an understanding of your culture…is different.” What remained a strong constant was his Christian faith, which began in his early childhood years. “You can ask most of my friends if anyone had a doubt that I was ever a believer, and there would be no doubt there. I am.”

His knack for business has remained just as evident since Tim’s childhood. In high school, he was part of Junior Achievement, an organization which partners with local businesses and schools in order to provide work-readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills through experiential learning. Involvement with this organization both confirmed and further strengthened his business proficiency. “I worked my senior year with some fellow students on creating a company, a product, and then delivering that product to the market,” he says.

Tim’s career in business began just after he graduated from Clyde A. Erwin High School in Asheville. “I didn’t grow up in a very rich household, meaning that we didn’t have a ton of money,” he explains. “We didn’t have to worry about having food to eat or clothes to wear, but I was probably lower-middle class, and so the option for me to go to college once I graduated high school…that burden was going to fall to me. My parents just didn’t have the means to do that. That was one of the reasons I didn’t attend college right after high school—I really needed to go to work.” So that’s what Tim did, beginning his professional career in the store room at the Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville. His knack for business continued—before long he was managing about $700,000 worth of inventory for the inn while in his early twenties.
At this time, Tim and his wife—who were not yet married—were discussing their long-term career visions. As Tim was researching jobs available in the Asheville area, he noticed an advertised position for an assistant director of materials management at Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital, now CarePartners Rehabilitation Hospital in Asheville. “[My wife’s] entire family is in healthcare, and so she thought, ‘Healthcare’s the way to go, I think you should try to get this,’” He recalls. “I was lucky enough to be selected for the position, and so off I went into healthcare.” That was in 1995—and he is still in the healthcare business today.

Tim is currently the president and CEO of Capstone Health Alliance, a regional group purchasing organization which works with both hospitals and non-acute facilities (any facility, besides a hospital, that delivers healthcare). “Our job is to reduce healthcare cost through the buying of products and services that hospitals do every day, along with collaboration and networking of our members together,” he explains. Capstone Health Alliance began in 2000 as a program which Tim and his colleagues founded under the WNC Health Network. In its early years, it serviced the 16 hospitals in western North Carolina. However, as its own company since 2013, its current members include nearly 300 hospitals and 15,000 non-acute sites which are spread across 24 states. It is the third largest alliance of its kind in the United States. Capstone’s 25-person team saved their members just over $50 million in total costs last year alone. “We’re lean and mean, but deliver a strong product,” Tim explains, with a laugh.

From the very beginning, Tim’s work ethic and knack for business were pushing him forward. “I always had the desire to succeed, and I felt like I had the motivation to as well,” he says. “I can’t tell you that I thought that I would ever be a CEO in healthcare. I thought for sure I would run some type of business; I just wasn’t sure what that was.” Now that Tim has reached success at the CEO level, he doesn’t claim the trophy of achievement for himself. “I believe wholeheartedly that God has a plan for everyone, and He directs everyone into what successes they can have,” he explains. Tim trusts that when people surrender their lives to God’s will, He will call them into their successes. “And [this] looks different for different people. For me, success was becoming a CEO and helping hospitals reduce cost… But some people’s success may be being a missionary or may be like my wife’s success in being a nurse. And I think that’s where a lot of people get confused about what success is,” says Tim. “Success doesn’t mean riches. [It] just means that you need to be happy in what you do and feel like you bring meaning and drive to everything that you do.”

Tim credits his guidance and career successes to God, giving Him the thanks for what success he has achieved. “I do believe [God] directs me into my decisions, and He definitely did into my career path,” he says. “Why else would I have gotten into healthcare in ’95, other than just picking up a paper and seeing an ad that had a healthcare job that I just happened to get selected for?”

This isn’t the only time an advertisement led to a positive change in Tim’s professional career. In 2003, he was working at both CarePartners Rehabilitation Hospital and WNC Health Network. “I had done really well in my career, but to continue the growth I needed to complete my degree,” he explains. “I always knew about Montreat College from growing up in Western North Carolina, [but] I just happened to see a magazine ad about Montreat’s Adult and Graduate Studies program.” Tim knew that he couldn’t go back to school full-time and had been looking for a strong adult program. “The enrollment representative at the time was a very nice woman by the name of Kathy Haney. Kathy did a great job explaining the program to me and getting me to an understanding of the program, and I think I signed up that day and said, ‘Okay, when does my cohort start? I’m ready to go!’”

Tim maintained his enthusiasm throughout his four years in the program, graduating in 2007 with his bachelor’s degree in business administration. “Once I was in a Christ-centered education, I felt much more comfortable in my learning,” he says. “I really enjoyed the professors, and I felt like they were my peers. At the time, I was in senior leadership so I wanted someone to talk to me and teach me from my perspective—someone I felt like I should respect in their field, and I think that all of the professors I had met that criteria.” A particular favorite of Tim’s was his marketing professor, Dr. Isaac Owolabi, who has been part of the Montreat faculty since 1994. “He’s very full of life. He was phenomenal.” Due to the incredibly positive impact of professors like Dr. Owolabi, Tim has even contemplated going back to school to get his master’s degree so that in his retirement he could look to be an adjunct at Montreat. He currently serves on the college’s President’s Advisory Council, a group of business, ministry, and civic leaders who have come alongside Montreat College in an advisory role.

In addition to the professional business skills Tim gleaned in the classroom from professors and peers at Montreat, he was also able to strengthen other skills which are vital to the Christian professional—and everyday life. “It’s all about being centered. I think we all get off-centered a lot,” he explains. “You will learn as you move into
your career that there will be days when you feel like your center is on top of your head. You just have that kind of pressure on you day in and day out. And I think for professionals especially, I will tell you that being reasonable, understanding, calm, and centered are four of the characteristics that you will always need to run your staff.” The way in which Tim saw this demonstrated at Montreat was to be centered on Christ, through prayer especially.

“[Montreat] was a good experience for me, and I credit it with really continuing my growth,” he says. “I don’t believe I’ve ever had the privilege of God talking to me directly, but I will tell you that I do believe His hand is on me all the time. Just because I haven’t heard it means I don’t believe it? No, not necessarily, because I have faith in my heart that God’s grace shines on me every day, and because of that I don’t need to hear it. I have God in my heart and I know He’s there. I think that’s the difference. As people, we get way too caught up in thinking ‘If I don’t see it, it doesn’t exist.’ [But] that’s what faith is. I have faith in my Lord that He’s going to take care of me, and I have a good calm sense about me because of that.”

Anastasia Howland ’20 is a Bible and Ministry major and English major at Montreat College.
The Road to Character

David Brooks
320 pages, 2015, Random House

Reviewed by Assistant Professor of Bible and Ministry Alex Sosler

In *The Road to Character*, New York Times Opinion Editor David Brooks introduces the book by orientating the reader to Genesis 1. He references Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, who argued there were two opposing sides to our nature: Adam I and Adam II. Adam I could be labeled our external self. This side is concerned with what Brooks labels our résumé virtues: what makes us look good, attractive, marketable. It functions on a market and economic scale. Adam II refers to the internal self—the moral part of us that functions on the reverse logic. In Jesus’ concepts, the last being first, the humble being exalted, the way up is the way down, etc.

By and large, the university functions on the logic of Adam I. We train people for careers; we serve the economy. We subliminally guilt students with questions like, “What are you going to do with that?” Compared to fifty years ago, students are much more concerned with being “famous.” A study shows that in 1976, young people reported that fame ranked fifteen out of sixteen on a list of life’s most important goals. By 2007, 51 percent of young people reported that fame was one of their top goals in life. It seems like we’ve become obsessed with the external, Adam I self.

Brooks challenges the reader to think about life differently. He prepares his readers for a life of character by exhibiting moral exemplars. Vocation is not a pursuit of external goals but a life of internal consistency. As Fredrick Buechner is often quoted, “that place where our deep gladness meets the world’s great need.” What if college wasn’t about solely meriting a high paying job but about helping teenagers become adults? What if a liberal arts college wasn’t concerned first with résumés but with character? The aspect that marks those people we admire is not necessary what they accomplished; it’s who they were. They were marked by a consistent joy, a life well-lived, a coherency and consistency. They weren’t fragmented but whole. In short, they flourished.

Brooks makes his case through moral exemplars. Each chapter features a different aspect of virtue and a case study of a particular person. The Christian reader may not find every example exemplary, but each person described does exhibit something worthy of imitation. He uses a wide range of examples: from social worker Dorothy Day to church father St. Augustine to civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph to President Dwight Eisenhower. The book ends with a “humility code” featuring 15 principles of humility in an age of selfies.
Another way to approach character comes from Canadian Clinical Psychologist Jordan Peterson.

Peterson has become the go-to guru for navigating the complexities of emerging young adults, particularly young men. As a young man myself, I try to ignore fads that my cohort enjoys. So I eagerly looked past the growing excitement and interest in 12 Rules for Life as another trendy self-help guide. But if you know a young person, they are likely engaging with Peterson in some form or fashion, and as a person who works with young people, I picked up and read. Rather than moral exemplars like Brooks proposes, Peterson proposes rules for growing into a certain type of person.

What one finds in Peterson is a well-read thinker and articulate writer. He references everything from the philosophy of Nietzsche to hard neuroscience to various religious myths. He can be meandering, but the book is regularly entertaining and well-written. It’s in this gift that he’s both charming and likable. Even if you don’t like who or what he references, if you read long enough, you’ll agree with him on some point. More appealing is his tactile description of growing up in the post-modern age, especially those experiences of young males. Whether it be the coddling of children, utopian visions run by ideologues, or the denial of personal responsibility, the reader can resonate with modern inadequacies. He accounts for the complexity of good and evil lying within the same person.

Into the vacuum of chaos caused by both the scientism of modernism and the suspicion of postmodernism, Peterson introduces new rules into our secular age. He does so by re-introducing something shocking to our modern ears: tradition. I might title Peterson’s book a religion of generous humanism or a tradition of autonomous individualism. In a world with no tradition, there is no meaning and no purpose. Peterson references tradition and story and myth and then manipulates it to make the point he wants. Tradition never seems to challenge Peterson’s views; it is always a reinforcement of his point. However, at least he’s appealing to things that have shaped history and are compelling, rather than dismissing them as archaic and meaningless.

In our current moment, everyone is left to themselves, and young people are lost. 12 Rules for Life provides a sort of rogue individualist tradition for life. He sums this up pretty well in his discussion of what men should value: “Do not be dependent. At all. Ever. Period.” Well, that’s an impossible thing, but it is riddled throughout his writing. In his chapter on hierarchy and power (Rule 1), he describes power as a limited resource that we all crave. We want to be strong and well thought of and at the top of the social class. Those who are at the bottom of the lower class are in danger of many things that those at the top are not bothered by. But he fails to mention Christ’s call to love the least of these, those at the bottom of the social spectrum.

In Playing God, Christian Author Andy Crouch describes power not as a limited resource but as exponential. It’s a multiplying resource, so that we can give it away and there’s more of it. It’s not a zero-sum resource when used in love. But for Peterson, there are winners and losers, and you ought to be a winner by getting all the power you can through competition. Or, in the chapter on personal responsibility (Rule 2), chaos is the domain of ignorance and unexplored territory. Chaos is a signifier for all things we do not know, which makes Christ’s call to love the stranger and sojourner and outcast all the more powerful. In his chapter on friendship (Rule 3), he encourages readers to be friends with people who help you grow and don’t drag you down into their bad or destructive or low-class behavior. But I’m sure glad Christ, who is our model of action, didn’t think or act this way. The power of the Gospel comes when Jesus tells the parable of the wedding banquet and all the outcast and dysfunctional people are invited into the same meal that Christ hosts. Christ comes to be with sinners like me. He cared very little to associate with the personally beneficial.

In Peterson’s rules, one still finds apt descriptions that are compatible with a Christian understanding of the world. At the very least, his rules are good for lost young adults in our modern age. Rules like “tell the truth” and “listen to others” are good things to promote. He frequently references the intentional nature of human beings, an idea which has early roots in Augustine. As such, he recognizes that everyone worships, and everyone has a god. Peterson says, “What you aim at is what you see.” He then challenges readers to aim higher; unfortunately, he fails in that he doesn’t aim high enough. Augustine says we ought to aim for love of God and love of neighbor in God. For Peterson, the highest good at which he aims is the autonomous individual. The center of life is you.

In an age of polarization, where a young person has the choice of being a socialist liberal or an alt-right conservative, Peterson’s middle way is a compelling option. He encourages himself and others to “Stitch it (a torn nation) back together with words of truth,” as he concludes at the end of the book. This advice is not everything in our age, but it’s at least something good. When Augustine converted from paganism to Manichaeism, Ambrose, then bishop of Milan, celebrated. It wasn’t Christianity, but it was better than the alternative. In the same way, 12 Rules for Life can be seen as a type of pre-evangelism. It’s not right, but there are some ways that it is helpful. It won’t take you the full way to Christ, but it is better than the well-documented aimlessness present in the next generation of young men.
September 27, 2018

Montreat College received an impressive ranking from *U.S. News & World Report* for its low student debt. The student debt load that Montreat College students had at graduation was the 2nd lowest among regional universities in the state of North Carolina, and the 13th lowest in the entire South region. According to the report, the average student loan debt for a graduating Montreat College student is 45% lower than the national average for all colleges and universities. The impressive ranking from *U.S. News & World Report* was the latest in a string of accolades Montreat College has received from national publications in recent years. In 2017, *Money* magazine named Montreat College one of America’s “Best Colleges for Your Money,” ranking Montreat 8th among North Carolina’s 48 colleges and universities. And in 2015, *The Economist* ranked Montreat College 5th among North Carolina’s 48 schools.

October 11-13, 2018

Montreat College’s Theater program performed William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* in the college’s Louan Gideon Theatre. The play was directed by Professor of Theater Callan White-Hinman, who was excited about the actors’ diverse dynamic of both theater majors and non-theater majors, athletes as well as non-athletes alike. For some students, it was their first production. The cast members doubled up on characters, adding to the comedic feel of the play by switching hats and other props to take on their different roles.

October 22, 2018

Montreat College announced that it will offer a student loan repayment assistance program called the Montreat College Commitment (MCC). The MCC is available to all incoming freshman and transfers with at least two years remaining who enroll in the college’s traditional four-year degree program for fall 2019. The MCC helps Montreat graduates in entry-level positions to pay off their student loans at no additional cost to students or their families.

August 21, 2018

Montreat College achieved the highest degree-seeking enrollment on its traditional campus on record in the school’s 103-year history. Overall degree-seeking enrollment on Montreat’s traditional campus was 538, up from the previous record of 520 achieved the previous year. The college welcomed 147 first-time freshmen and 61 new transfer students, bringing overall new student enrollment to 208. An additional 72 non-degree-seeking students brought the headcount to 610 students on the traditional campus, also an all-time record. In addition, Montreat College’s School of Adult and Graduate Studies enrolled 301 students in Asheville, Charlotte, Morganton, and online, 175 undergraduate students and 126 graduate students, bringing the grand total to 911 students attending Montreat College.

August 31, 2018

Montreat College announced that it was named a Gold-level Champions of Character Five-Star Institution for 2017-18 by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The honor continued an impressive run of Champions of Character designations for Montreat, and was the second consecutive year the college has achieved Gold-level status, ranking among the top 74 NAIA schools in the country. In determining Champions of Character schools, the NAIA measures institutions on their demonstrated commitment to fostering character development within athletics. Schools earn points in character training, conduct in competition, academic focus, character recognition, and character promotion.
November 2, 2018
Montreat College hosted its 4th annual RETR3AT Cybersecurity Conference. RETR3AT is designed to engage, educate, and raise awareness about cybersecurity in Western North Carolina and beyond. The conference goes beyond the “1s and 0s” approach to cybersecurity training, challenging attendees to think about how to lead in protecting their organization’s information within an ethical framework. This year’s RETR3AT keynote speaker was Strategic Link Partners Co-Founder Joan Myers. Other speakers at the conference included SAS Cybersecurity Solutions Vice President Bryan Harris, D4C Global Chief Operating Officer Tiffany Lopez-Winters, National Small Business Association President Todd McCracken, Snyder’s-Lance Sr. Information Security Manager Mike Muscatell, North Carolina House Appropriations Chairman of Information Technology Rep. Jason Saine, Rocus Networks CEO Pete Seeber, Counter Hack Founder Ed Skoudis, Retired U.S. Army Special Operations Commander Lt. Gen. Kenneth Tovo, and AIG Cyber Security Risk Consultant Dan Wilson. 350 guests attended the conference, up from 307 the year before.

November 19, 2018
Montreat College announced that Asheville-based biotechnology company Sanesco International had donated a mass spectrometer valued at $300,000 to the college’s Natural Science Department. The 2.5 by 1.2 foot spectrometer includes components which make it conducive to analysis of water-based environmental samples. This fits well with Montreat’s setting, as much of the student and professor interests are in this type of study—such as analysis of Flat Creek’s water.

January 9, 2019
Montreat College welcomed a new campus store into the L. Nelson Bell Library. The store, which was named “Nelson’s” in a campus-wide vote, offers a variety of food and drinks—including coffee, cold drinks, frozen meals, dry goods, and ice cream—as well as other essentials like medicine and school supplies.

March 19-20, 2019
Montreat College welcomed writer, speaker, and spoken word artist Jackie Hill-Perry as the year’s Calvin Thielman Lecture Series speaker. Hill-Perry’s work has been featured in The Washington Times, The 700 Club, Desiring God, The Gospel Coalition, and other publications. Since coming to know Christ at the age of 19, Hill-Perry has been compelled to share the light of Gospel truth through teaching, writing, poetry, and music as authentically as she can. She is signed to Humble Beast Records and released her debut album, The Art of Joy, in 2014. Her latest album, Crescendo, was released in 2018.

November 16, 2018
Lydia Wilson, a sophomore from Smithfield, Va., earned All-American honors for the third time, placing 17th in the 5,000-meter run at the NAIA National Cross Country Championships in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Montreat College’s Men’s Cross Country also competed at the national championships—a first time for the program—finishing 21st after winning the Appalachian Athletic Conference Championships earlier that month.
FACULTY NEWS

August 2018

1. Assistant Professor of Bible and Ministry Alex Sosler published the articles “Leading by Love: Leadership and Practice in the Gospel of John” in the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* and “Reason, Love, and Morality: The Limits of Reason in Kohlberg and the Importance of Love in Augustine and Smith” in the *Journal of Religion and Education*. He also gave the presentation “What is Christian Education For?: Assessing the Various Teleological Priorities of Christian Higher Education” at the Society of Professors in Christian Education Conference in October of 2018.

2. Associate Professor of Psychology and Human Services Brad Faircloth published the paper “The Effect of Outdoor Orientation Programs on Participants’ Biophilic Expressions” in the *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education* with co-authors Nathan Meltzer, Andrew Bobilya, Denise Mitten, and Resa Chandler.

September 2018

3. Associate Professor of Music Business Kevin Auman gave the presentation “Leading with Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom” at the 2018 Appalachian College Association Annual Summit in Pigeon Forge, Tenn.
English Professor Don King received a Faculty Fellowship Award from the Appalachian College Association in support of the research for his forthcoming book *Soldier, Inkling, Writer: A Life of Warren Hamilton Lewis*. And an excerpt from the book was published in *VII: The Journal of the Marion E. Wade Center* at Wheaton College.

Professor of History and Faculty Fellow—and *New York Times* best-selling author—William Forstchen published the novel *48 Hours*, which *Publishers Weekly* called his “best book to date.” It is also the 50th book that Dr. Forstchen has published in his illustrious writing career.

Assistant Professor of Psychology and Human Services Megan Clunan published the article “Narrative Therapy in Christian Counseling” in the *Journal of Applied Christian Counseling*. She also gave the presentation “Counseling Psychology and Spirituality Are Not Antithetical: The Ethical Necessity to Address the Whole Client” at the North Carolina Counseling Association State Conference in February of 2019. And in the spring of 2019, Professor Clunan and Assistant Professor of Counselor Education and Clinical Mental Health Noreal Armstrong published the chapter “Harper: Courageous Cultural Conversations within the Counseling Room, Overcoming Complacency with Competence and Confidence” for the book *Cases on Cross-Cultural Counseling Strategies*. 
Phoebe Blackwell Rollins ’59
Phoebe transferred from Montreat in 1959 to Queen’s in Charlotte, N.C. She has lived in Easley, S.C. for 50 years. She has a son, Michael, who lives in Greenville, S.C. Her younger son, David, passed away in May of 2007 from pancreatic cancer. She taught school for 30 years and retired in 1993. Her sister, Lucille, graduated from Montreat in 1958. Phoebe loved her time at Montreat.

Hilda Ferguson Booth ’63
Hilda is a retired mental health counselor. She survived 23 years as a consultant in Palmetto Health Richland Emergency Department. Her late husband was killed in an accident May 21, 1990. She has not remarried. She traveled to Ireland in September of 2018. Hilda and her brother, Arthur (Happy), were with their older brother, Wooten, when he died Jan 25, 2019. Hilda teaches QiGong at the Lourie Center. Her students are all over 50. She finds it very rewarding to help older adults remain active.

Fredrick M. (Mike) Lewis ’65
After over 40 years with the US Army as a helicopter pilot and JAG lawyer, Mike finally retired and is enjoying spending time with his five grandchildren, camping, motorcycling, and doing a little (very little) legal consultation. He gets back to Montreat about once a year, usually to camp with the family and just enjoy being back in that very special place.

David Dempsey ’67
David is from Greenville, S.C., and was at Montreat from 1965-67. He moved back to Greenville after living on the road for a few years, got married to his wife, Sandra, and still is. He sells commercial real estate for Berkshire Hathaway and is generally comfortable. He would love to know about his old classmates. His nickname at Montreat was “Ratman”—luckily that dropped. He had some great times at Montreat, and loved most of it!

Susan Bayer Braford ’68
Susan graduated from Montreat College in 1968, then completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Western Carolina
University. She taught high school math in Suffolk, Va., where she completed her C.A.S. degree at Old Dominion University. She was named Suffolk Teacher of the Year in 2011. Susan retired from public school teaching in 2013 but continued as an adjunct at Paul D. Camp Community College for two more years. She and her husband, Bob, retired to Lexington, Va., in July 2018 and love it there. She has fond memories of her two years at Montreat.

Terry Dover ’72

Terry retired after 40 years in education, having earned several statewide honors during a distinguished career—including the GAESP Georgia Distinguished Principal Award, the GAEL Georgia Outstanding Elementary Educator, the GA ARC Network’s Educator of the Year, and the GAEL John Yates Scholarship. Terry served on the GAEL State Board of Directors and as president of the 9th District GAESP Principal’s Association. In retirement, he continues to serve as a consultant for the 21st Century Communities in Schools grant-funded after-school program. Terry played on the basketball team while a student at Montreat and has continued to give back to the sport as a Georgia High School Association certified game official. Having just completed 38 years, Terry has served as a clinician at referee training camps across Georgia. The local Multi County Basketball Officials Association, of which Terry is a member and past president, recognized his contribution to the sport by establishing the Terry Dover Outstanding Service to Basketball Award, which is given to one of the association referees at the end of each high school season.

Kristi L. Servies ’74

Kristi has bought a house and moved back to N.C. She is in Louisburg now so that she can be close to her granddaughter.

David and Robin (Laughon) White ’77

David and Robin live in Flowery Branch, Ga., where he serves as assistant director of member care and development with Mission to the World and she teaches at Chestnut Mountain Presbyterian Church Preschool. They are pleased to announce the birth of granddaughters seven and eight, twins Melody Jean and Megan Lilly Encarnacion, on February 19, 2019.

Willis Dowling ’77

Willis died of a heart attack on September 15, 2018. Willis was serving as a Christian school teacher at Oaktree Academy. He had formerly served as pastor of Cypress Chapel Christian Church, South Norfolk Christian Church, and Chesapeake Bible Fellowship and was attending attended Atlantic Shores Baptist Church. He had served as an adjunct professor at Regent University and served with Pastor in Residence Ministries. His son Benjamin Willis Dowling ’04, brother Rev. Ben Dowling ’83, and sister Helen Dowling ’79 are all Montreat alums. The picture on the left is of Willis and his sister, Helen, during Montreat Homecoming 2017, where he attended the 40th reunion of the Class of 1977.

Abby Bates ’78

In January 2018, Abby moved into a retirement community in South Asheville. In March, she celebrated her six-year anniversary working at the Child Care Center of First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, where she is a teacher/float. She loves it every bit as much as the day she took the job, and it is by far the best job she has ever had.

Kerrie Morgan Scruggs ’79

Kerrie is teaching 1st grade in Maynardville, Tenn., and loving it—but is looking forward to retirement. She has been married to her husband, Steven, since 1982—37 years of happiness. They are the very proud parents of four happily-married sons. Their oldest son has made them grandparents of two precious grandsons; their second son lives in Alaska; their third son is in Japan; and the baby is in Denver. The Lord continues to bless them daily with health and happiness.

Brian O’Hara ’82

After working with the office of Oklahoma 1st District Congressman and now NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine as deputy district director for the past six years, Brian has taken over in the same capacity with newly elected Congressman Kevin Hern of the 1st Congressional District for Oklahoma.

Tracey Morrison ’94

Tracey lives in Charlotte N.C., where she has been since 2007. After living in Black Mountain since she graduated, she felt God call her back to her hometown of Charlotte. She started volunteering at the Billy Graham Library from the day it opened its doors, has continued to volunteer every Wednesday, and has grown in the Lord so very much. She enjoys seeing many children to adults come to the Lord and seeing other special events happens at the library. In 2013, thanks to a lot of prayers, she started working at the NASCAR Hall of Fame, which she is very proud to be a part of. God has blessed her with some wonderful opportunities that she cannot imagine with any other job. She has also been blessed to be an ambassador at the Wells Fargo Championship golf tournament every May since 2008.

Anu-Riikka Henriksson ’95

After 26 years as an expat—the last 15 years in Oslo, Norway—Anu-Riikka has returned to her native Finland, moving to Seinäjoki in August of 2018. She receives a disability retirement and, when not helping her aging parents who both suffer from different stages of Parkinson’s disease, she is an active book and food blogger on her own website.
Mishelle Lockerby ’17
Mishelle graduated with a master’s in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She is thankful to be working with Family Preservations Services of the Western Region as a CST team lead. She is a provisionally licensed therapist and clinical addiction specialist seeking full licensure. She will soon pursue basic training in EMDR, a body-mind approach to treating complex trauma, and seek full certification in this. She is interested in pursuing additional studies, but is still in the early exploration stages.

Justin Wiggins ’18
Justin is from Eastern North Carolina. Although he grew up within the church, he was an agnostic. Through knowing authentic, intelligent, and compassionate followers of Christ, the influence of the music of Switchfoot, and the writings of C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald, he became a follower of Christ about 12 years ago. He went to Pitt Community College, graduated with an associate degree in 2012, and then went to East Carolina University, which he did not finish. He eventually came to Montreat College in 2017 under the influence of Dr. Don King. He came to love Black Mountain, Asheville, and Montreat, found a great community of people at Redeemer Anglican in West Asheville, came to have an amazing community of family and friends, and has had many rich life experiences. Some of those experiences were graduating in May of 2018 with his bachelor’s degree in literature; getting to go to Oxford, England; meeting C.S. Lewis’s stepson Douglas Gresham and becoming a friend of his; and over this past summer finishing his book *Surprised by Agape*, which was published through Clarendon House Publications in Sheffield, England. Justin is currently working as a librarian assistant at Montreat College and loves living in Montreat. He eventually wants to teach literature. He loves his life and marvels at the goodness and love of Christ.

Vickie Smith ’18 and Jessica (Smith) Osterhout ’18
Jessica and her mother, Vickie, both graduated Montreat together—from the same program!—in December of 2018. Jessica and Vickie started the master’s in counseling program in 2015 together and graduated in 2018. They attended the Charlotte location.
Supportive friends of the college have offered to match all gifts to the Keystone Scholarship Fund and Strategic Growth Fund—dollar for dollar—up to $350,000!

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