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THE WORD

*a Newsletter from
the English program
at Messiah University*

May 2023 | Issue 10

WRITER TALKS: "LEMONADE"

Check out the latest episode of *Writer Talks*, hosted by Nate Castellitto and featuring original work by Adam Carter.

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SUMMER READING

Students recommend books - classics and new releases - to top your summer reading list.

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RESEARCH AND CREATIVITY

Research is fundamentally a creative act of "seeking" not just information or knowledge, but truth.

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Look Inside!

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: NED KUCZMYNDA

by Nate Castellitto ('23)

Last spring, the English program's Ned Kuczmynda graduated from Messiah. In the calendar year since then, he's worked full-time with the Shalom Project in Lancaster, Penn. The project is an intentional community of recent graduates and young adults who are committed to service and social change. Both intrigued by and proud of such an experience, I met up with Ned over Zoom in April to catch up and learn about what life has been like post-grad.

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Shalom was founded by a group of community leaders from Mennonite and Anabaptist congregations in Lancaster. The program's members live in one house together in Lancaster City, and each individual works with a different organization on behalf of the project. Ned has gotten to work first-hand with the Library System of Lancaster County. He spends most days traveling with the library's "Bookmobile," which is exactly what it sounds like.

"Really, we drive around to a bunch of places in [Lancaster] County and fulfill typical library activities. There are a number of retirement communities, preschools, community centers, and Amish grocery stores which we regularly stop at," Ned said.

A mobile library, of sorts, represents a tangible need in certain regions and communities. Many people don't have reliable access to a public library. Other factors such as physical limitations or means of transportation may contribute to barred access.

"It's not like we're giving books to someone that has never had one before," Ned shared. "But to give a more common example, there is an elderly woman at one of our stops who isn't fully mobile. She doesn't get out a ton, either. She loves documentaries, though, and it's a privilege to be able to ensure that this woman is able to watch, say, the most recent nature documentaries."

While Shalom's program is designed to be a stepping stone for individuals seeking a preliminary taste of what it's like to serve in similar capacities, the work that Ned has done with Lancaster's library system might evolve into a more permanent pursuit.

"After finishing my undergraduate, I approached [the program] as a trial to see if I enjoy library work before I do more school. I've started to think about that of late. I think I might want to go to grad school for library science. I'm not far along in the process, and I'm working in a very specific application of what a library can do, but the sort of cultural programming that a library has the opportunity to do is a really cool thing," Ned said.

For those who aren't familiar, Library and Information Sciences (LIS) is a field of study that involves the management of books and information, as well as the intricacies of materials collection in libraries. Most public libraries are associated with a broader, regional system, and the function of each one requires knowledgeable practicing librarians. It's a field sustained by caring professionals, and they must be enthusiastic readers, like Ned, to execute day-to-day programming such as book clubs, educational events, and curation.

I was lucky enough to have a few classes with Ned during his time at Messiah. My first impression of Ned came in Dr. Jean Corey's Writing for Social Change in fall, 2020. We had just finished reading a personal essay, whose title and author escape me now, that dealt in part with

"I might want to go to grad school for library science . . . the sort of cultural programming that a library has the opportunity to do is a really cool thing."

“... cool about learning, conversation, and life itself.”

psychological and mental health. The essay was incredibly well-written, but I remember leaving the piece wanting a stronger or more tangible resolution. I voiced that feeling in our group discussion, to which some of our classmates nodded their heads. After ten seconds or so, Ned started to speak and said something along the lines of:

“I see where you're coming from, Nate. I think the beauty of writing, though, is that certain conventions can be reconfigured in service of a story. Especially when it comes to social issues, sometimes getting the conversation started is exactly what is needed to help eventually change hearts and minds.”

It might seem insignificant, but those sentiments began to open me up to possibility and heightened empathy. The world is far from a black-and-white place. Understanding that craft and matters of the soul are a colorful palette is part of the maturation that comes with earning a liberal arts degree. Ned, unknowingly, was an early partner in that transformation for me.

There is no shortage of evidence that Ned is a well-cultivated individual. His curious, genuine approach to the arts has set him up for success, and that fact was apparent in each class I shared with Ned. Of course, his music tastes are no exception. Toward the end of our video chat, I asked him to recommend two bands or artists to listen to.

“Oh man, just two is tough. There's one band called Wreckage. They're from Connecticut. I'd recommend them to someone who is into aggressive but catchy music...Another is the new Boygenius (stylized “boygenius”) album. I've been digging on that. It's sort of like upbeat indie rock,” Ned said.

One of the first titles that is displayed on Boygenius's Spotify artist page is “Cool About It.” It seems fitting that the recommendation would come from Ned, who is generally among the most measured voices in any room—cool about learning, conversation, and helping others.



Find out more about The Shalom Project at shalomlancaster.org or  @theshalomproject.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

by Nate Castelletto ('23)

Dr. Hasler-Brooks and I started this project more than two years ago during the 2021 spring semester. It began at one of our biweekly work study meetings out of a genuine appreciation for the remarkable students and professors who've come through our doors. We wondered if there was a way we could regularly spotlight those individuals in an official but creative medium. With curiosity and community as our guiding principles, the English program's quarterly newsletter, *The Word*, was re-established.

In ten issues, we featured original work from students' workshop portfolios and research presentations. Prestigious professors were generous to lend their experiences for insightful interviews and profiles, and students and professors alike helped illuminate feature topics like "What is the Best Writing Tool," "How Do You Handle Stress," and "Reading Books Together."

There are plenty of moments from the work that stand out. But most of all, the insights and knowledge that I gained from conversations with peers and faculty are what I will carry with me most. In classes too, it has been an overwhelming privilege to be able to study and learn alongside earnest, attentive practitioners of the field. The English program prides itself on those students' commitment to understanding and craft, as well as their diverse offerings to the fields in and around English studies. I'm thrilled that Serena McQuoid, Emma Bane, and Adam Carter—next year's work study employees—will continue to produce engaging content here.

As the senior class prepares to graduate, I couldn't be more excited for those of you who are first years, sophomores, and juniors. The work that you do is not only academic but intelligent. The conversations that you have aren't just philosophical and scholarly; they are important and God-honoring. I'm inspired by the contributions you will make on Messiah's campus and to the world after you've been equipped for your respective vocations. I pray for all the best, and remember to keep the faith. Peace and blessings.

Listen now!



WRITER TALKS

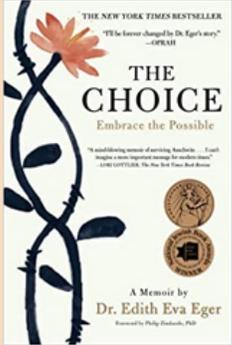
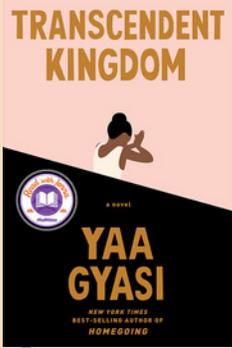
Check the podcast from the Messiah University English program featuring student writers - and special guests - reading and discussing their original poetry and prose.

Recent Episodes

Episode 7:
Adam Carter, "Lemonade"

Episode 6:
Caleb Stassel, "Terminally Online"

Episode 5:
Elizabeth Movinsky, "Boxing Club"



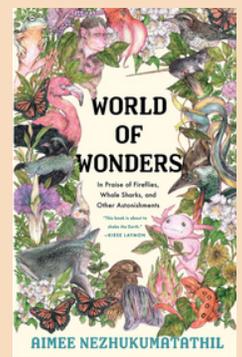
Ana Sakore, '25



Ethan Riesler, '26



Em Bell, '25



Ananabelle Dionisio, '23

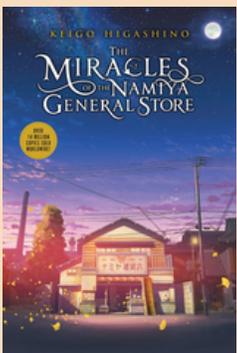
YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMER READING

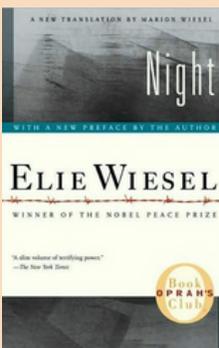
PICK UP ONE OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SEND US AN UPDATE THIS SUMMER!



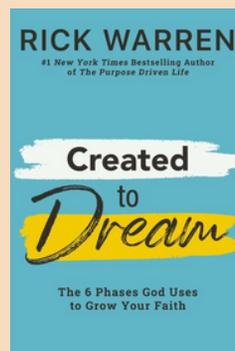
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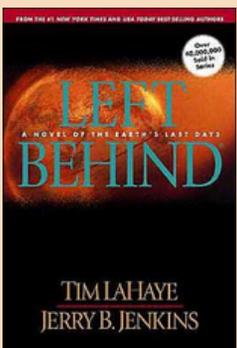
Elisa Wilson, '26



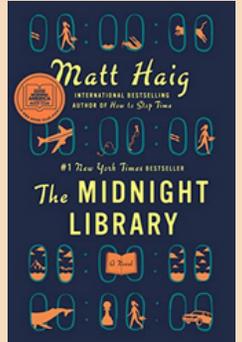
J.T. Crocenzi, '25



Melody Pha, '26



Colby Connolly, '26



Lauren Mock, '25



Savannah Guess, '25

**“it’s
important
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Devotional: Renewal

By Nate Castellitto ('23)

There are few sights on Messiah’s campus more refreshing than the many trees and bushes regaining their leaves in April. The beginning of spring is a breath of fresh air after a long winter, and a reminder of Central Pennsylvania’s natural beauties. In many ways, spring reclaims the landscape. The new season is a renewal of what was missing in the previous one. On the other hand, winter is also a necessary period. Many of the region’s ecosystems and organisms depend on a season of dormancy so that they can thrive throughout the rest of the year. For example, certain plants need chilling phases to store up energy for new and prolonged growth.

The life of a Christian leader is much the same way. Leadership coaches often share that it isn’t wise to preach or put oneself in positions of focus at all times. Even the best of us are constantly learning, so now and again, it’s imperative that leaders spend time out of the spotlight. It’s during these times, whether it be several days or longer, that they take a step back and allow the soul to shape itself after God’s own heart.

2 Corinthians 5:17 may be a familiar verse for some. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.” That guidance is a cornerstone for so many Christians’ comfort in redemption. Christ’s sacrifice represents the foremost example of renewal. It is renewal of the sinner’s former ways, but those behaviors and attitudes will inevitably resurface even after the acceptance of salvation. That’s why it’s important for believers to spend time in figurative silence, so that they can check their nature and ultimately flourish.

English students might know better than anyone that it’s impossible to be the best teacher or writer they can be without committed reading and scholastic habits. The Christian faith is no different. A Jesus-seeking Christian is one who is as careful to spend time in prayer and scripture as they are to witnessing and producing. After all, renewal doesn’t take place over a single moment in time; it’s a journey which needs regular reminders and diligence to allow the requisite space for God to work through and in our hearts.

Congratulations 2023 Graduates



KIAAH BAKER

English w/ Teaching Certification

Future Plans: Teach English in the Harrisburg area or Baltimore/D.C. area.

Favorite Memory: Dr. Smith playing the guitar and conversations with Kerry.

Advice: Make the most of your time with peers, friends, professors, and the resources you have on campus.



MADDI MOSHER

English w/ Creative Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Graduate school, specifically in Higher Education

Favorite Memory: Submitting my literary non-fiction portfolio to Professor Rickrode after working on it for months.

Advice: Think broadly about the work that English is able to do, and the work you are able to do through English.



MOLLY MCKIM

English w/ Professional Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Communications Editor at CrossState Credit Union Association; write for a local magazine or newspaper.

Favorite Memory: Learning about myself and my love for literature and language.

Advice: Be confident in yourself—mentally, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Keep an open mind and learn everything you can. Be gentle and caring to yourself.



ALI SCHUTTE

English w/ Teaching Certification

Future Plans: Teach English at home in NJ or here in PA.

Favorite Memory: Reading *The Things They Carried* as a class outside the High Center on warm days.

Advice: Participate in class! The environment of a collegiate English classroom is both so welcoming and intellectual. So, involve yourself in the conversation.

Congratulations 2023 Graduates



NICOLE SERIANNI

English w/ Teaching Certification

Future Plans: Teach English at a Christian K-12 school in NJ to fulfill my passion for and calling to Christian education. My hope is to teach at the school I attended!

Favorite Memory: Discussing life, literature, and calling with Dr. Hasler-Brooks over coffee.

Advice: Soak up every moment on campus--as cliché as it sounds. Say yes to friends and to could-be friends as often as you can.



ANNABELLE DIONISIO

English w/ Teaching Certification

Favorite Memory: Dr. Smith playing guitar during finals sessions.

Advice: Stay true to your voice. Write how you write. Read how you read. Be honest in your craft.



ALEXA NICHOLAS

English w/ Teaching Certification

Future Plans: 7th grade English Language Arts Teacher at Mountain View Middle School in Cumberland Valley School District

Favorite Memory: Kerry Hasler-Brooks' English 202 class.

Advice: The college years go quick! Enjoy it.



NATE CASTELLITTO

English w/ Professional Writing Concentration, Creative Writing Minor

Favorite Memory: Without saying “all of it,” I enjoyed even the day-to-day processes. I’ll never forget the laughs shared with classmates before and after lectures.

Advice: Find your lane; don’t let anyone deter you.

Congratulations 2023 Graduates



EMILY BRAGA-FLORES

English w/ Creative Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Relax with family. Travel the world to spend time with myself and refresh my mind. Work as a medical scribe or research assistant to attend medical school.

Favorite Memory: Being able to observe people's thoughts with Board Talks.

Advice: The biggest obstacles are the ones we set up ourselves without even knowing it. Be confident in yourselves and finish your race in your own time.



PEYTON CASSEL

English w/ Teaching Certification

Future Plans: I look forward to getting married in June and moving to Southeastern PA. I hope to find a job teaching in that area.

Favorite Memory: Presenting my Honors English Project.

Advice: Your time as an upperclassman will creep slowly, then suddenly end. Savor the time, friends, and circumstances that you have now. These are temporary privileges that you likely will never experience the same away again in life.



HYE LIM JUNG

English w/ Creative Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Complete a teaching program with Center for Urban Teaching and we'll see where God takes me from there.

Favorite Memory: Having group discussions outside of Boyer on the grassy hill and in the warm sun.

Advice: Annotate, annotate, annotate!



DANIEL SMUTEK

English w/ Professional Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Pursue positions in a news station, a photography position of some sort, or work on one of the railroads here in Pennsylvania.

Favorite Memory: Magazine Writing with Professor Markley

Advice: Recognize your interests and what's most important to you, and pursue it. You can do something with the skills and talents you've been blessed with.

Congratulations 2023 Graduates

CALEB STASSEL



English w/ Creative Writing Concentration

Future Plans: Work for the summer and then go right into the field. I have lots of independent research to do and so much art to consume.

Favorite Memory: When I was first referred to as the “media guy”.

Advice: Consume material that isn't for your classes. Indulge yourself in some creative, artistic or investigative effort that not only gives you a break from your stressful school work, but also makes you a better writer, creator and person. You will find that just about everything can be applied to your vocation when you look at it in just the right light.

JULIA WITTEL



English w/ Literature Concentration

Future Plans: Serve in a year-long fellowship with the Coalition of Christian Outreach to continue working with the Messiah University Campus Ministries office. Work as a freelance copy writer for Tucker&Co. in Dillsburg, PA and Lauren Henrie Consulting, a Maui based communications & Non-Profit consultant.

Favorite Memory: Every moment I sat in a class with Kerry Hasler-Brooks.

Advice: As a disciple of English, the world of words opens up to you in unique and often quite overwhelming ways. My encouragement to you, dear student, is simply this: take care. Take care of your thoughts, ideas, dreams, stories, and language. Take care as you create and take care as you intake. Take care as you read and take care as you write. Take care as you think and take care as you speak. Words, your words, hold more power than you will ever know. So please, take care.



THE PEREGRINE REVIEW

Thank you to Student Editor Molly McKim, faculty advisor Dr. Samuel Smith, the rest of the Peregrine staff, and all of the contributors for the 2023 issue of Messiah University's literary journal. You can read this and other recent issues online:

<https://mosaic.messiah.edu/peregrinereview/>



Registration is open!

Young Writers' Workshop | June 25-30, 2023 • Apply online by June 1

A unique summer writing program held on the scenic campus of Messiah University

- Designed to foster a community of young writers through an enriching, summer writing camp environment
- Provides college-level writing skills development for **students in grades 9-12**
- Offers intensive courses in creative writing taught by published faculty and writers
- Fields trips, poetry readings and other activities are included.



- Personalized attention — class sizes limited to 15 students
- Practical session about how to write a college admissions essay

Register by April 1 to receive the discounted rate.

Financial Aid is available to those who qualify.

Tuition, room and board

Students will reside and dine on campus within walking distance from class in Boyer Hall. Students are chaperoned by trained resident assistants. Scholarships available.

Resident student and commuter student: Rates are posted on our website.

** Local students are strongly encouraged to take part in the full residential program.*

For more information, contact Sally Keefer at youngwritersworkshop@messiah.edu or 717-691-6013.



Register today at messiah.edu/writersworkshop

Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/young.writers.workshop

Research and Creativity: A Note from the Chair

by Dr. Kerry Hasler-Brooks

Zora Neale Hurston, the discipline-changing anthropologist and novelist, thought of herself first and foremost as a researcher. For many students, research is an uninspiring word, a tedious task stripped of creative thinking, distinct voice, play, delight, and imagination. But Hurston's life and writing reinvigorate research as a creative art and skill.

As Hurston wrote in her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* and lived out in the pages of her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose." Research is fundamentally a creative act of "seeking" not just information or knowledge, but truth.

I have experienced this in my own work as a scholar of American women's writing - namely by Katherine Anne Porter, Edwidge Danticat, Toni Morrison, and Emily Dickinson - and I see it regularly in students who ask brave questions, read dangeorusly and widely, and make creative contributions not only to the scholarly worlds of literature, creative writing, and professional writing but to their lives as people seeking beauty, truth, and justice.

For all the creative research you did this semester and all that will continue - formally and informally - thank you. May your summer be full of "poking" and "prying" and "seeking."



“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein.”

-Zora Neale Hurston

2023 SACS Research Symposium

Olivia Reardon ('26), "The Mother-Daughter Bond: Nanny's Influence on Janie's Road to Empowerment in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*"

Evelyn Kelly ('26), "Watching the Storm: Old Testament Reinvention of God in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*"

2023 National Conference for Undergraduate Research

Hye Lim Jung ('23), "Meeting the Monster: A Creative Exploration of Korean Culture and Mythology"

Congratulations!



Micaiah Saldaña: Student Research Grant Winner

Micaiah Saldaña ('24) is the most recent recipient of the Friends of Murray Library Student Research Grant. The award will support Micaiah's senior honors research project, "My Last Military I.D and Other Stories From Growing Up Army". In this project, Micaiah will use story to provide a space for the lives and voices of fellow children of U.S. service members and to help members of the non-military community better understand and interact with the military community.