

The Word

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a newsletter from the english
program at messiah university

HOW DO YOU HANDLE STRESS?

By Nate Castellitto

As we enter the second half of the semester, coursework and other commitments are in full swing. For most college students, stress becomes a normal feeling. Acute stress is a result of tension, and it can, surprisingly, be positive in short bursts. To get an idea of what English students at Messiah do to balance their commitments, I've asked some friends, "How do you handle stress?"

"I begin by asking myself this question: Do I need to do something different or do I need to rest?" shared Sophomore Micaiah Saldaña. "If I need to approach the stressor differently, I evaluate the situation and make a plan for moving forward. If I need rest, I like to rest by spending time with my friends, watching an episode of 'Downton Abbey,' or baking anything containing chocolate."

Micaiah's pragmatic approach is a good reminder. It is important to prioritize personal well-being while attending to work and curricular activities. Activities that relax the brain and muscles can help offset the strain our bodies and mind are subjected to each week.

"I find cooking to be very therapeutic. The process of creating a dish you can later stress-binge on is quite calming," said Senior Clara Yu. Senior Jenna Becker added, "The way I deal with stress is doing self-care. I take a shower, use skin-care products, and drink a caffeine-free tea."

Stress management can look different for each person. Perhaps it's saying no to a favor or electing not to go the extra mile on a given assignment. Planning ahead can help as well. "If I'm stressed about the amount of things I have to do in a day, I'll usually handle stress by making a to-do list of things I need to get done and sticking to it. But if I'm just feeling anxious in general, I'll do what my intuition tells me. Like if I don't feel like doing something particularly productive, I'll just watch TV, but if [and] when I'm feeling anxious, and I want a heavier distraction, then I'll read or write as an escape," Sophomore Caroline Hadley said.

It's easy to lose track of our mental state when keeping up with the demands of college life. Remember to listen to your bodies and do the things which give you peace.



Left to Right: Micaiah Saldaña '24, Clara Yu '22, Jenna Becker '22, Caroline Hadley '24, Nate Castellitto '23

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WORK IN PROGRESS: STUDENT WRITERS

God Messaged Me on Facebook Today

By Nathan Hurley '24

God messaged me on Facebook today – And no,
I’m not delusional like that, okay?

He said: “My son, the time is here! You’ve been
A loyal child of Christ – now pay attention
To what I say. Make sure you stay away from sin,
For that’s the stuff that lets the devil in!
And don’t forget to help the poor and needy—
But of course, don’t let them get too greedy!
I recognize you are a busy man,
And you’ve done this as much as you can—
So all in all, I’m quite pleased to say the least.”

Confirmed! I knew I was a holy fellow!

I kept on reading (God types quite the long
Paragraphs!), eagerly awaiting his
Instructions. This is what He said to me:
“Do you remember what I’ve said about
Loving your neighbor as you love yourself?”

“Of course!” my text replied politely. “Well,
Here’s the one thing,” He wrote. “It all has been
A little misconstrued. I want you to
Extend love to them all, excepting those
Different than you. If they love or look
Or act or think astray from your persona,
Cast them out like diseased lepers who don’t
Deserve acceptance.” Huh, I thought, I guess
That is what Jesus would do. And to think
That all along they said I’d lost my mind,

But God’s on Facebook, proving I’m justified.



EPISODE 1

WRITER TALKS

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

In the episode 1, host Nate Castelltito discusses poetry with student writer Nathan Hurley. Hurley reads his work in progress - "God Messaged Me on Facebook Today" - and discusses his craft and call as a writer.

Listen to episode 1 now!



Why English?

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is language. Through English I can serve others and make the biggest impact for God and his kingdom.

Best Messiah experience?

The homecoming soccer game. It was a beautiful display of love and fellowship. I remember saying to myself, "This place is special."

Music recommendation?

"Somewhere In Between" by Philip Vo

Summer plans?

I will be playing college summer league soccer with Imago Dei in North Carolina. I will compete at a high level and serve God and the community through missional projects.

Favorite verse?

John 16:33 - "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Why English?

I believe in the power that literature has - both on a personal level and on a larger scale. I want to help the next generation be able to advocate and express themselves through writing.

Best Messiah experience?

I've really enjoyed playing on the women's basketball team at Messiah and finding a community with them.

Book recommendation?

The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Summer plans?

I am looking forward to road trips with my friends and spending time at the beach.

Favorite verse?

Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Why English?

I love words, and I hope that I can use English to make a positive impact on someone's life.

Best Messiah experience?

Participating in Deck the Halls with my residents as a First Year RA.

Book recommendation?

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Summer plans?

Watching my little brother graduate from high school.

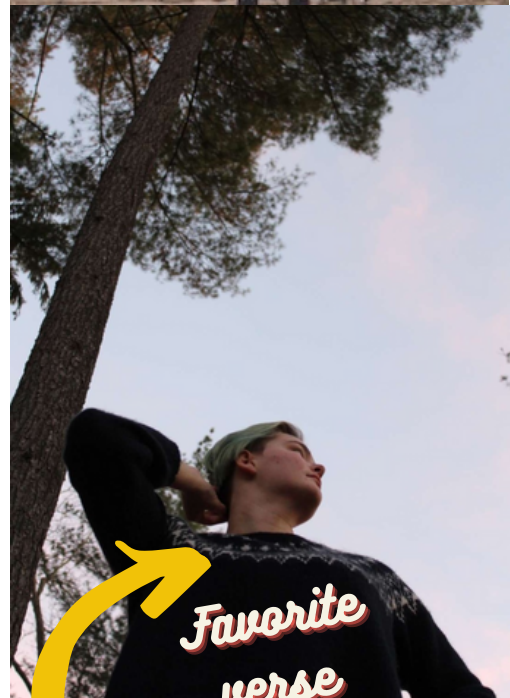
Favorite verse?

Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

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A Devotional WRITING THE VISION

Following years of disobedience and wayward living, God describes his intentions for Judah in the book of Habakkuk. The prophet pleads on behalf of Judah at the beginning, to which God ultimately replies with plans for justice—at the hands of its enemy, Babylon—and deliverance for His chosen people.

Habakkuk proves to be an important book in the evolution of Christian thought. One of the more famous ideas to prevail from God's response is "writing the vision." In chapter two, God says to Habakkuk "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it" (2:2 ESV). In context, the vision God speaks of is their conversation. Unlike Jonah (at first), the frustrated Habakkuk heeds the Lord's commands, and in turn praises Him.

The message from chapter two speaks today. It was of high importance that Habakkuk physically write down the words God spoke to Him. Writing things like thoughts, ideas, and goals down is shown to have a keen effect in practice. Recording often marks the first step of bringing them to life.

As practitioners of the written word, our goal is, in this way, similar to Habakkuk's. Called to a space where voice is valued, the words we write matter. Whether they be our own or those appointed by God, the work we do in the field has the power to move proverbial mountains.

Writers, do the work of God.

By Nate Castellitto

Reading as Friends

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS



I spent most of my spring break at a conference with fellow educators from Christian colleges and universities - Wheaton, Calvin, Seattle Pacific, Westmont, Hope, Aquinas, and more - thinking through the role of literature in public life.

Using Kathleen Fitzpatrick's call for educational reform in *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University*, we spent hours reflecting on and debating the relationship between public reading and academic reading, reading that happens in the world and reading that happens in our classes or our scholarship. We met with community partners from libraries, schools, museums, churches and non-profits to think through the logistics of community-based literature programs. We, as a gathering of new friends, laughed and told stories over meals and walks around Holland, Michigan. And, of course, we read and discussed and re-read together, most closely the poems in Joy Harjo's recent collection *An American Sunrise*.

In the poem, "A Refuge in the Smallest Of Places," Harjo writes to "Emily Dickinson, one of the singers" and to "all those fleeing on the ancient migration trails north, for home," and as I read I was reminded of the life-giving and sometimes life-saving effect words have in the world. The singers, from Frederick Douglass to Tim O'Brien, Toni Morrison to Marilynne Robinson, Emily Dickson to Joy Harjo cross borders and boundaries and divides, reaching out and gathering us up. And in this the singers and the poets become our friends and help us to live together as friends.

I think I was so gripped by this poem because I met it in the company of friends, old friends like Emily Dickinson and new friends like Jennifer, Cynthia, Beth, and Bill who played no small part in restoring me and bolstering me for the work before us.

What a gift to read in the company of friends, not least of all you, my students.

by Joy Harjo

A Refuge in the Smallest of Places

For Emily Dickinson, one of the singers.
And for all those fleeing on those ancient
migration trails north, for home.

Someone sang for me and no one else could hear it
When I had given up and made knife marks on my arm
Or drank and gave myself away or was given

Someone sang for me and no one else could hear it
When demons came with rope and cages
To take my children from me and imprison us

Someone sang for me and no one else could hear it
Now I am here in the timeless room of lost poetry
Gathering up the destroyed and forgotten
Because of the songs someone sang that no one else could hear.

But me.

HONORS RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

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A Great Story Lives Within Me: Experiences of a Chinese Adoptee

Rosemary Jones (*English and Communication '22*)

This project considers the crucial role that storytelling has taken in the author's understanding of her identity as an individual, a part of her family, a Chinese American, and an adoptee. Rosey recounts stories from her childhood and her present as she seeks to make sense of who she is to herself, to God, and to the world around her.



Andromache: Seeking Hope in Homer's Iliad

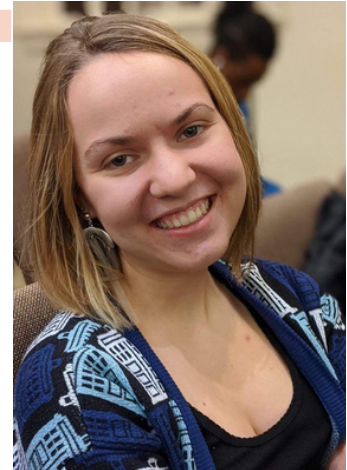
Rachel Hungerford (*English '22*)

This project is a fictional adaptation of *The Iliad*, told from the third-person perspective of Andromache, the wife of Trojan commander Hector. By centering Andromache's perspective, Rachel hopes to showcase a yet-unheard female voice and demonstrate that there are still moments of love, fidelity, and goodness in the midst of war.

Social Stories: Bookmaking in the Life of an Autistic Artist.

Anya Benninger (*Studio Art and English Minor '22*)

This project names the artist's early relationships with language and perception, and describes how art objects have reconciled them."



The Balm of Gilead: Neuroaesthetics of Empathy in Fiction

Courtney Smith (*Biochemistry and English '22*)

This interdisciplinary project explores the neuro-psychological basis for literature's ability to cultivate empathy in the reader. These concepts are illustrated through close reading of John Ames, the protagonist of *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson, who mirrors and maps cognitive empathy.



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Alexis V. Jackson:

Poetry and Reconciliation



San Diego-based writer and teacher Alexis V. Jackson delivered the first “Poets & Writers Series” reading and writer’s talk of the spring semester in late January. Jackson earned her undergraduate degree in English from Messiah University in 2013. Since then, she’s completed Columbia University’s MFA program and begun to claim her place in the contemporary poetry landscape.

On January 25th, Jackson spoke with Dr. Roth’s Formal Poetry Workshop students, and on January 26th, she led a workshop on “Poetry as Reconciliation.” As a poet, Jackson works extensively in form. Her talk with Dr. Roth’s students focused on one form, the pantoum, and Zuihitsu literature. Turning to persona poems for the workshop, students were invited to consider the ways poetry is and can be an instrument for reconciliation.

During the evening reading on January 25th, Jackson shared a selection of poems from her debut collection, *My Sisters’ Country*, which was released on January 31st. The collection was named the second-place winner of Kore Press Institute’s 2019 Poetry Prize. As reviewers acclaim, Jackson’s extraordinary, amalgamating work “explores the makings of Black girlhood and womanhood” and “invites readers to consider the ways Black women, who were once considered countryless property, made country out of and in one another.” Her book examines the questions which emerge from this discussion.

Jackson was a finalist for the 2021 Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship. Her work has been selected for numerous publications, including most recently Poetry Magazine (Dec. 2021).

To read more about Jackson and her work and to order a copy of *My Sister’s Country*, visit www.alexisvjackson.com.

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

MARCH 29

Poet and Writes Series
and Nisly Endowed
Reading with John Poch
7:30 - 8:30 pm, Recital Hall



MARCH 31

Honors Project Proposals due

April 20

Honors Presentations:
Rosemary Jones and Rachel Hungerford
6:30 - 8:00 pm, Boyer 131 and Zoom

April 25

Honors Presentation:
Anya Benninger and Courtney Smith
TBD

MAY 1

Year End Social
to celebrate Seniors
and Professor Perrin
3:00 - 5:00 pm, TBD



Publishing Opportunities

Capulet Magazine

“Capulet Mag seeks the best in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art. This publication highlights the work of young women writers and artists of all levels. Capulet Mag empowers young women to share their creativity with Juliets everywhere. This magazine is a safe place for all who identify with the women experience to express themselves in a safe, inclusive community.” Submissions are currently accepted on a rolling basis.

Ember: A Journal of Luminous Things

“One of the foundational goals of Ember is to foster the next generation of great writers by providing them with excellent reading material now. We believe that people who learn to love reading at an early age are more likely to seek knowledge in science, technology, engineering, and math.” Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.

Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle

“Sigma Tau Delta Review (founded in 2005) is an annual journal that publishes critical essays on literature, essays on rhetoric and composition, and essays devoted to pedagogical issues. Manuscripts should not exceed 3,000 words, but exceptions will be made for essays of stellar quality. Critical essays must follow the Modern Language Association style guidelines as defined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (latest edition).” Submissions will be accepted between April 11 and May 9, 2022.

Sigma Tau Delta Review

“Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle (founded in 1931) is an annual journal that publishes literary non-fiction, fiction, and poetry. Prose manuscripts should not exceed 2,500 words.” Submissions will be accepted between April 11 and May 9, 2022.

Internship Opportunities

Digital Content Writer/Copywriter Spring/Summer Internship

“If you’re a talented and enthusiastic writer looking for an opportunity to refine your skills through real world experience, check out our digital content writing internship. As a JPL intern, you will be working at the intersection of creative storytelling, content strategy and user experience.”

2022 Summer Internship: Editorial

“Penguin Random House offers a 10-week paid, remote internship opportunity available in our adult, children’s, and corporate divisions. Interns are exposed to the publishing process and our business through panels, networking events, employee speaker series, and even lunch with our CEO!”

Social Media and Content Writing Internship

“Revolver Gallery exclusively buys and sells artworks of Andy Warhol and has the largest gallery-owned collection of the artists artwork in the world...We require the following: an excellent content writer who is self-motivated, autonomous, efficient, organized, articulate, very computer and internet literate, and very familiar with social media.”

Editorial Intern - Summer Internship Washington, DC or Brooklyn, NY

“Slate is looking for an intern for its Technology section, which encompasses science, health, tech, tech policy, and business, and includes the Future Tense vertical. The intern will be responsible for writing articles and assisting with editorial research. They must be organized, have a proven interest in journalism, and be familiar with Slate’s style of analysis and opinion.”