

AColyte

Commencement 2013
A Journal of Faith, Doubt, and Other Things
at Austin College



Standing pat's not in the cards

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A Journal of Faith, Doubt, and Other Things at Austin College

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**CONGRATULATIONS
TO THE 2013-2014**

**AUSTIN COLLEGE
SALLIE MAJORS
RELIGIOUS LIFE INTERNS**

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

Finals Week
Building to the crescendo
Fighting a losing battle against sentimentality
Probably ready for a long summer's nap
May 15, 2013

Change could happen any day.
--Richard Shindell

Many a long and lonesome highway lies before us as we go.
--Rodney Crowell

Those two lines have come out of my computer's Pandora shuffle since I sat down to write this.

Everywhere I turn this week, there are reminders of big changes afoot.

It's Commencement Week. It's a lot like every other Commencement Week. There are a lot of people who I have come to know and love whose lives are changing in a really major way this week. It's kind of bittersweet.

It's all good. We've all worked hard to get to this week. But the fact is that a lot of us are gonna miss the folks to whom we'll give degrees on Sunday. It's just part of the deal.

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There's this song that I find myself humming a lot every Spring as I start thinking about commencement and graduates who I have seen pretty much every day for the last four years. It's a sappy, sentimental song sung by a father who is traveling and thinking about—and missing—his four-year-old daughter.

*There's hard times waiting up the trail
Thunderstorms are bound to come
My mind can conjure many things
That I want to save you from
But standing pat's not in the cards
Someday you are bound to go
I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know*

*There will surely come a day
When the page is turned and the moon is all we'll share
I expect I'll think of you
But you will not be there
You will still be in my heart
Love this deep is bound to grow
I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know*

*And the sun sets only once today
And when it's gone, it's gone
Let's have some fun while the light's still good
And tomorrow face the dawn*

*You will be alive and fierce
A storm like they have never seen
I'll be telling stories true
And you'll dream all your pretty dreams
You will reach to hold my hand
When I am old and moving slow
I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know
Today, I love you for all time
And today is all I know.*

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There's hard times waiting up the trail

It's not that everything's gonna be hard for all you graduates.

You really are smart, amazing, well-educated, gifted, well-prepared, competent people. And the world will never be the same after you get hold of it.

Thunderstorms are bound to come

But not everything will work out according to your plans and preferences.

I think this is what's going on in Psalm 23:4 when the Psalmist talks about "walking through the darkest valley" or "the valley of the shadow of death."

Life is not always gonna be Free Bowling and Chicken Patty sandwiches.

My mind can conjure many things That I want to save you from

Economic distress.

Illness.

Heartbreak.

Tragedy.

Disappointment.

In Luke 13:34 Jesus says: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!” His mind could conjure many things from which he wanted to save them.

*But standing pat's not in the cards
Someday you are bound to go.*

It won't work unless you leave.

We're going to miss you more than we'll say—but you have to go. The world desperately needs what you can offer. We love you but we don't want to keep you here. We want to help you leave and leave well.

It's like last call: “You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here.”

*I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know*

Of course this is all just speculation.

Your story is yet to be completed. We'll probably worry about you a little bit.

But we can't wait to see what you do next.

That's part of the fun.

And in the meantime...today...this week...we're really proud of you.

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*There will surely come a day
When the page is turned and the moon is all we'll share*

It's a fact. The vast majority of the folks to whom we give degrees on Sunday will not be around here this time next year. Or even this time next week.

And as I just said: your story is yet to be completed.

Although—there is one story that we'll all still be part of. You'll never graduate from being Austin College alumni. It's like herpes—once you get it, you'll never get rid of it.

(I bet that image never shows up in a brochure—but I'm just sayin'.)

*I expect I'll think of you
But you will not be there*

We do that, you know? Even after you're gone, we still think about you and talk about you.

*You will still be in my heart
Love this deep is bound to grow*

Grumpy, gruff, hardass poses notwithstanding, we really do love you—all of us do. Not in a creepy, inappropriate way—but still. We're certainly not here for the big bucks and glamour. We love being small characters in your great and epic stories.

*I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know*

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*And the sun sets only once today
And when it's gone, it's gone*

That's why we stop everything else and mark this significant event. All of us will do lots more cool and important work after Sunday. But it's important to pause and recognize the significant accomplishment of completing a degree at Austin College.

It's a big deal.

Not just for you—though definitely for you.

Not just for those of us who work here.

But for the whole world.

Seriously.

*Let's have some fun while the light's still good
And tomorrow face the dawn*

Commencement is so serious that we have to have a party (actually, *several* parties) to adequately celebrate you and your accomplishment.

To quote Psalm 118:24—"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

There's hard work to be done.

But that can wait until Monday.

Rejoice.

Be glad.

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You will be alive and fierce

You will meet two A.C. alums this weekend.

Fred Morgan (Austin College Class of 1967) will be our Baccalaureate preacher on Saturday and will receive an Honorary doctorate on Sunday. You can read a nice biographical sketch about him in the Commencement program.

Helen Lowman (Austin College Class of 1988) will introduce our Commencement speaker. You'll learn more about her on Sunday morning as well.

But what the programs and formal introductions won't tell you is that Fred Morgan and Helen Lowman are *alive* and *fierce*.

They've touched lives.

They've made a difference.

They have not held back and wished somebody else would do something. The world is different—and better—because of things they've done.

That's how you'll be.

In fact, it's how you already are.

A storm like they have never seen

In Isaiah 43:19, God says, "I am about to do a new thing."

You're that new thing.

I'll be telling stories true

There will be stories. Stories like:

- Live-action Quidditch in East Texas,
- BBC animal videos on Route 66 ("Night time ... DAY time"),
- a fainting girl in Wichita Falls,
- a fox at an outdoor worship service,
- 60,000 meals prepared and sent to Honduras.

And those are just my stories about a few of you.

Tell us your stories.

Tell them to each other.

Cherish and tend them. They'll always be part of who you are.

And you'll dream all your pretty dreams

It's dreams that got you here. And you're leaving with more dreams. And better ones.

Cherish and tend the dreams as well.

Fight for them.

If you'll forgive me a little *faux* Latin:

Illegitimi non carborundum. ("Don't let the bastards grind you down.")

*You will reach to hold my hand
When I am old and moving slow*

This Spring, we are saying goodbye to five retiring faculty members (Kathleen Campbell, Mike Imhoff, Jim Johnson, Howard Starr, and E. Don Williams). I don't think any of them are particularly slow, but they *are* older than most of the rest of us (except Jack Pierce). And it has been nice to watch current and former students and colleagues express well-earned appreciation and affection for each one of them.

*I suspect a lot of things
But today is all I know
Today, I love you for all time
And today is all I know.*

The day after Commencement is kind of hard around here.

We're all glad for the break. We've got plenty to do to wrap up the year and get ready for another batch of freshmen.

But we'll miss you.

Thanks for letting us be part of your story.

Thanks for being part of ours.

Until September, I remain
Just Another Cowboy Preacher,
Eager to Hear Your Stories and Learn New Ones from the Class of 2017,

JOHN WILLIAMS
Chaplain

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SPECIAL THANKS FOR A GREAT YEAR IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE PROGRAM TO:

Ayelia Ali
Samrena Allawala
Cora Barraza
Jessica Carlson
Wayne Crannell and the *A Cappella* Choir
Naureen Dharani
Yasien Eltigani
Heather Farquhar
Jordan Ghez
Jason Henry
Urooj Khan
Michael Luk
J.P. Marshall
Amanda Mayfield
Madison McGee
Nancy Morgan and the Service Station Board
Jennie Nichols
Emily Record
Nagasri Shankar
Rod Stewart

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ONE LAST THING—

Go out into the world and be people of peace.

Acts 16:36

"therefore come out now and go in peace."

Have courage.

Acts 27:25

"So keep up your courage"

Hold on tight to all that is good.

Romans 12:9

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good"

Return no one evil for evil.

Romans 12:17

*"Do not repay anyone evil for evil,
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all."*

Support the weak.

Acts 20:35

*"In all this I have given you an example
that by such work we must support the weak..."*

Strengthen the fainthearted.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

*"And we urge you, beloved,
to admonish the idlers,
encourage the fainthearted,
help the weak,
be patient with all of them."*

Honor all people.

Philippians 2:29

"Honor all people"

Go to class.

Isaiah 46:10

*"My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfill my intention,"*

Manage your time.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

*"For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven."*

Get some sleep.

Exodus 23:12

*"Six days you shall do your work,
but on the seventh day you shall rest"*

Share what you have.

Luke 19:8a

"Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor;"

Speak truth tenderly and lovingly.

Isaiah 40:2

"Speak tenderly to Jerusalem"

Ephesians 4:15

"But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way..."

Clean up your own messes.

Luke 19:8b

*"And if I have defrauded anyone of anything,
I will pay back four times as much."*

Use the brains God gave you.

Genesis 2:19

*“So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field
and every bird of the air,
and brought them to the human to see what he would call them;
and whatever the human called every living creature,
that was its name.”*

**Act like gifted, beloved, capable, safe people.
Because that IS what you *are*.**

1 John 3:1

*“See what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God;
and that is what we are”*

1 Peter 4:10

*“As good stewards of the manifold grace of God,
serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ”*

Genesis 2:19

*“and whatever the human called every living creature,
that was its name.”*

Psalms 139:7-8

*“Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.”*

**And go with the full confidence
That the grace, mercy, and peace of Almighty God
ARE with us all;
Today; Tomorrow; and Forever.**

Matthew 28:20

“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Psalms 139:18b

“I come to the end —I am still with you.”

Seriously.

Amen.

(and it's still a good idea to hang up your towels).