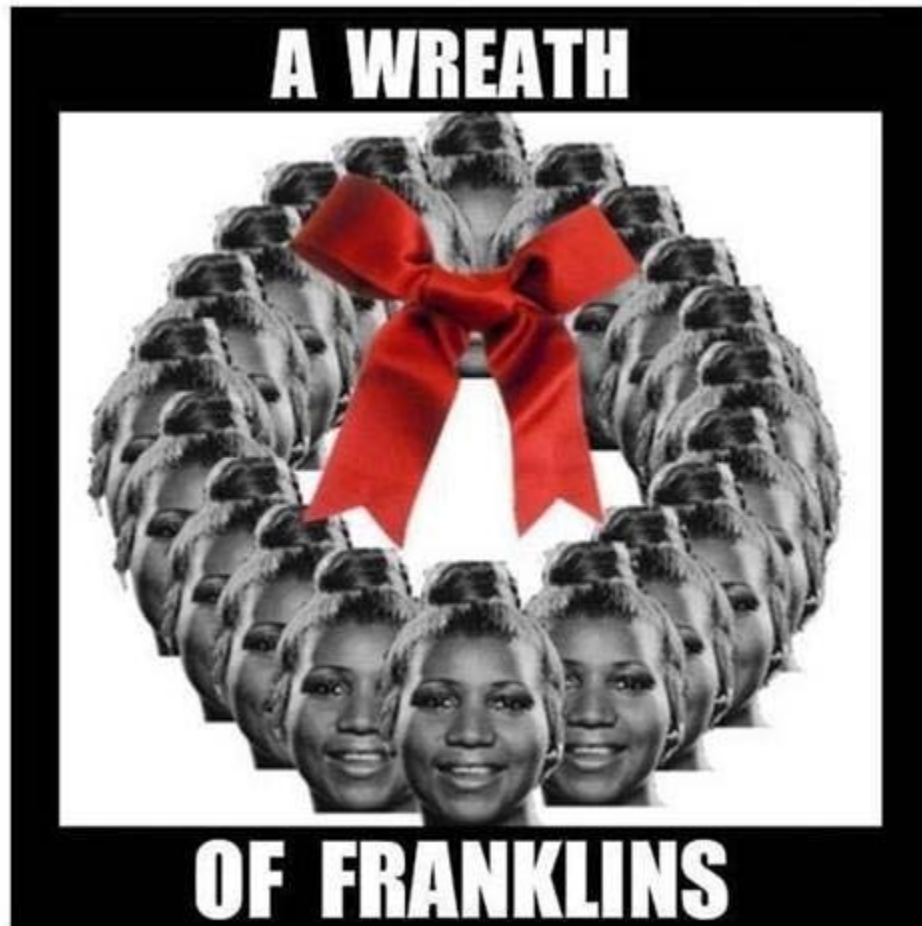


# AColyte

Holidays 2015

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



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## AColyte

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

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# WHAT IS THE *AColyte* AND WHY DO I HAVE ONE?

Welcome to the first edition of the *AColyte* for the 2015-16 school year. This journal is intended to provide a forum for the Austin College community to discuss theological issues and keep up with what's going on in our various Religious Life programs.

We operate with a fairly broad definition of theology around here. As far as we're concerned, anybody who spends time thinking about which things matter more than other things is a theologian. That probably even includes you.

The use of the term "AColyte" for our title is based on our hope that, like an acolyte who lights candles in a worship service, we can also be "bringers of light," or "bringers of flame," or instruments to help "lighten things up." If nothing else, we can promise to provide ample opportunities to practice the virtues of patience and forgiveness.

Feel free to reply if you have questions or comments or corrections.

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

Paris,  
Colorado Springs,  
San Bernardino,  
And the hills outside Austin

Advent 2015

Every time I turn on CNN lately, I end up thinking about this Robert Earl Keen song:

*You take off from work a bit early  
The boss doesn't care if you stay  
The guard with the key needs to check your ID  
But he'd just as soon blow you away*

Yikes.

*The cops have stopped ten miles of traffic  
They're sorry for all the delay  
No need for alarm as they're waving their arms  
But they'd just as soon blow you away*

Chicago. Philadelphia. Albuquerque. Ferguson.

*Two pretty blondes in a Porsche  
Their bumper says, "We love L.A."  
They look pretty fair, but they're crazy out there  
And they'd just as soon blow you away*

San Bernardino.

*You got in some trouble in high school  
But you feel like a new man today  
You keep to yourself because anyone else  
Would just as soon blow you away*

Colorado Springs.

*You're standin' in front of the teller  
She's countin' out all of your pay  
There's twenties and ones and there's guards with their guns  
And they'd just as soon blow you away*

You get the idea.

*And one old ex con at the station  
Fixes flats in the back of the bay  
He winks and he jokes and he borrows a smoke  
But he'd just as soon blow you away*

Open carry.

Campus carry.

Sometimes this is what it feels like to be us.

Here.

Now.

*You like the new girl at the hotel  
She drops your room key in the tray  
No words will pass through the bullet proof glass  
'Cause she'd just as soon blow you away*

There are plenty of voices saying that what we need is more guns.

*You climb up the stairs every evening  
To your room right above the cafe  
There ain't much mystique, but you pay every week  
'Cause they'd just as soon blow you away*

*And you turn out the light that you read by  
You pray that you're one of the few  
When you're in with the Lord, there's just one reward  
And they'd just as soon make it come true*

It kind of makes sense for religion to make an appearance.

It comes up a lot.

Especially when people are anxious and scared and frustrated.

*Your mattress is mildewed and lumpy  
But you fall fast asleep where you lay  
Under the lump there's a twenty gauge pump  
'Cause they'd just as soon blow you away*

Merry Christmas...right?

To be clear, some of it is CNN.

If you think that cable news is in the business of delivering a complete, accurate, and thorough picture of the real world as it really is, it would be easy to conclude that this song is simply reporting what everybody knows to be true; that this is how the real world is.

“They’d just as soon blow you away.”

But that’s bullshit.

Sorry for the colorful language – my Mom and my wife hate when I do that – but that’s what it is.

Bullshit.

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My friend the songwriter David LaMotte wrote this on Facebook the other day:

*Our information technology is kind of like a massive magnifying glass, finding the most horrible things going on in the world, and filling our vision with them.*

I think that’s a really helpful reminder; an important piece of perspective and critical thinking.

Mass media is big business. And the business model is basically to make you anxious so you’ll keep watching so the advertisers who sponsor the programming can advertise at you and try to get your money.

They especially want to make you worry about your health so you’ll pressure your doctors to prescribe the medications that pay to sponsor the television stuff.

It’s all a business. It’s not a public service.

And you’re not even the consumer.

You’re the product being sold.

David goes on:

*Those things [“the most horrible things going on in the world’] are true, but they are not the only story. They are not even the main story.*

Do you believe that?

Let me show you something else; another true thing:

[\*\*Austin College students host vigil for Paris victims\*\*](#)

That’s where we live.

That’s part of the whole truth.

In fact, I think that's the main story.

Toward the end of the news story, AC freshman **Aurora Hadzic** says,

"Seeing all of these people come out and supporting Paris and supporting the victims of the terrorist attacks kind of shows that we're stronger than them...that *we can still look forward to tomorrow.*"

And then MSA President **Rohail Rahman** says,

"We all share this Earth, and every human life is equivalent to another human life. *There's no one who's more important than anyone else.*"

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That Candlelight Vigil was November 18.

And as I stood there, held my candle, and looked around at those AC students who had gathered together and shared Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Christian prayers for peace and healing, I was reminded of a conversation I had in the hills outside of Austin eleven days earlier.

I was standing on a hill outside Austin because I was performing a wedding.

The groom was an old friend of mine.

He had spent 18 years as a heroin addict.

He is 68 years old.

As we stood together and watched the congregation gather, he said,

"This is weird. The only time I usually see all these people any more is at funerals."

And then he paused...

and said,

"I guess they figure the last good thing hasn't happened yet."

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That's why we don't give up.

That's why we don't listen to the voices that try to convince us that some people matter more than other people.

That's why we resist the shrill and persistent calls to be afraid of each other.

That's we get up and get together on this campus every day and try to take the right things seriously.

That's why at this time every year Christians like me trot out this weird story about a pregnant unwed teenager with no place to sleep.

And her extraordinary baby.

It's because we believe.

We believe that the last good thing hasn't happened yet.

We believe that the story isn't over.

We believe that it's about *all* of us.

We believe we can be – we intend to be – part of the next good thing.

Joy to the World!

Until 2016, I remain,  
Just Another Cowboy Preacher,  
Rubbing elbows with answered prayers,

JOHN WILLIAMS  
Chaplain



# HEY ACTIVATORS

## REST UP!

**We've got lots to do in the Spring  
Let me know if you're interested  
in helping with any of the following events:**

### January 6 - Worship at Homestead Denison

ACTivators lead a brief worship service at the Homestead Senior Care Center in Denison on the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

We leave from Zauk Circle at 4:30pm,

Lead the Worship beginning at 5:30,

And then go eat dinner together at a local restaurant.

### January 15-17 - Palo Duro Presbytery "WARP'D" Retreat (Floydada, TX)

ACTivators will travel to Floydada on Friday morning January 15, lead energizers, lead music, serve as human props for the Keynote, and lead Small Groups.

### January 20 - Worship at Homestead Denison

### January 29-31 - Grace Presbytery Senior High Youth Connection, "SHYC" (AC Campus)

- We need ACTivators to be
  - Small Group Leaders (Juniors & Seniors),
  - Assistant Small Group Leaders (Sophomores),
  - And Floaters (Freshmen)

### February 3 - Worship at Homestead Denison

### February 17 - Worship at Homestead Denison

### February 20 - Whitesboro Community Breakfast

- Interested ACTivators will get up very early on Saturday February 20 and go to Whitesboro to help members of First Presbyterian Church prepare and serve breakfast to Whitesboro residents, some of whom are homeless.
- Planning meeting in my office at 4:30pm on Thursday February 18.



## February 26-28 - Grace Presbytery Junior High Youthquake West (Glen Rose, TX)

- We need Small Group Leaders for this event.
- Being a Small Group Leader means leading four Small Group meetings over the course of the weekend, participating in fairly silly keynote skits, and doing some other work related to the planning and leadership of the conference.
- ACTivators teams need to leave the AC campus no later than 3:00pm on the Friday of the event and will be back to campus around 4:00pm on Sunday.

## March 5 - Grace Presbytery Meeting in Wynne Chapel

- This will be a meeting of about 250 Presbyterian ministers and elders from Northeast Texas.
- I know it's the first Saturday of Spring Break, but we need some ACTivators to help host this meeting.
- You'll get a catered lunch.

## March 16 - Worship at Homestead Denison

## March 18-20 - Jill's House Camp for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Camp Buckner Hill 3835 FM 2342, Burnet, TX 78611)

- A group of at least 10 ACTivators will spend the weekend at Camp Buckner Hill outside Burnet, Texas by serving children with intellectual disabilities under the guidance of Jill's House's experienced professionals.
- Jill's House is the first and only mission of its kind in the United States. We provide overnight respite care for children between the ages of 6 and 17 with intellectual disabilities so that their weary families get a break. Our innovative programs allow children to experience fun and exciting activities for the very first time and meet other kids just like them.



While we celebrate special children, their parents and typical siblings get the gift of time. This rhythm of respite makes a positive impact. Their families use their time of respite doing things that may otherwise be difficult while caring for their child with special needs. This physical rest points the way to the true spiritual rest that Jesus offers.

- We will leave from Sherman at 9:00am on Friday morning March 18.
- Planning meetings for the Jill's House Camp will be at 4:30pm in the Small Chapel on March 15 and 17.
- There will also be additional training when we get to the Camp.

### **March 26 - Stewpot**

- Interested ACTivators will leave campus at 8:00am on Saturday morning March 26 and drive to downtown Dallas.
- We will serve lunch and dinner to the homeless clients of the First Presbyterian Church Stewpot ministry.
- In the afternoon, we will tour the Stewpot facility.
- We will have a planning meeting in my office at 4:30pm on Thursday March 24.

### **April 1-3 - Grace Presbytery Kidquake #1 at Glen Lake (Glen Rose, TX)**

- This is a weekend retreat for 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade kids.
- ACTivators make up half of the Leadership teams for each of these events.
- 6 ACTivators will be part of the Leadership Team for this event.
- There will be planning meetings at 4:30pm in the Chapel Conference Room on March 28 and 30.

### **April 6 - Worship at Homestead Denison**

### **April 15-17 - Kidquake #2 at Gilmont**

- There will be planning meetings at 4:30pm in the Chapel Conference Room on April 12 and 14.

### **April 20 - Worship at Homestead Denison**

### **April 22-24 - Kidquake #3 at Gilmont**

- There will be planning meetings at 4:30pm in the Chapel Conference Room on April 19 and 21.