

AColyte

May 22, 2020

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



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

Still here

Day 62 since most of you left campus

Increasingly grateful for Spotify

And Bluetooth speakers

May 22, 2020

*Dancing to the Doomsday Rock
Dancing to the Doomsday Rock
You know it's gonna have to stop
When it does, we'll have the biggest sock hop
--The Planets,
"Doomsday Rock"*

*My love is guaranteed.
You're never gonna see the end of me.
--The Neville Brothers,
"Guaranteed"*

*That is to say:
I could be right.
--The Planets,
"Interview"*

*...and the days I keep my gratitude
Higher than my expectations,
I have really good days.
--Ray Wylie Hubbard,
"Mother Blues"*

*She lived all alone in a two-bedroom rental.
She sang about rhinestones and pink Continentals.
She was tough as a bois d'arc, but still sentimental.
We took her her own Christmas tree.
--Tone Deaf Cowboys,
"Gypsy Ghosts"*

Actually, that last song is a lie.

It's about the woman in the white jacket in the photo below.

She sang about pink Cadillacs, not pink Continentals, but that didn't fit the meter of the song.

Just call it Poetic License.

Her name was Denise Brissey then, now it's Denise Brissey Cohen.

The band is called The Planets.

I saw The Planets dozens of times in the early 80s, mostly at Blossom's Downstairs in Ft. Worth, but also at Nick's Uptown in Dallas, Hub's and Dixie's Bar & Bus Stop in Austin (where I ended up dancing on TV with **Terri King Lins, AC '84**), and Farquhar's Tavern in Durango, CO.



And one night in the Fall of 1983, they played in the old Pouch Club at Austin College.

I thought (and still think) they were a great band.

[If you'd like to hear how they sounded in 1981, here's a full concert <https://youtu.be/c-eJz3GZ8Qs> --ED.]

There were four strong songwriters in the band and they had several excellent original songs, but they also played an eclectic blend of cover songs.

The Planets helped deepen my appreciation for Joe Ely ("Fingernails").

They introduced me to a funky Rod Stewart song that I hadn't heard before ("Better Off Dead").

And they were how I came to know about artists like Elvis Costello ("Mystery Dance"), Marshall Crenshaw ("Someday Someway"), and Tex Thomas & the Danglin' Wranglers ("Shaky Fingers and Ice Cold Feet").

Most of the Planets shows I ever heard included a B.B. King song called "When It All Comes Down." I knew that song because I had heard it many times at Planets shows, but the first time I ever heard the B.B. King version was on the radio in Switzerland in 1984.

That's kind of a long, rambling, nostalgic way to introduce y'all to this great B.B. King song, "When It All Comes Down."

[Here's the song: <https://youtu.be/UTMIR7tNTEs> --ED.]

That's where the words come from that are on the back of this year's ACtivators T-Shirts (see above).

*When it all comes down
Look for me
I'll still be around.*

It's a great song. We'll get back to it in a minute.

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As many of you know, we posted the Austin College Virtual Baccalaureate last week.

[If you haven't yet seen it but would like to, click here <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2714470758682683>--ED.]

The response has been amazing.

Thousands of people have seen it in one format or another.

And hundreds of Facebook commenters have taken that opportunity to congratulate and offer their best wishes to the AC Class of 2020.

One alumna, **Melida Ailshire**, posted the Baccalaureate Benediction and one of her classmates, **Austin Trantham**, commented on her post.

"These words always ring true, yet they seem to take on a special meaning during these times."

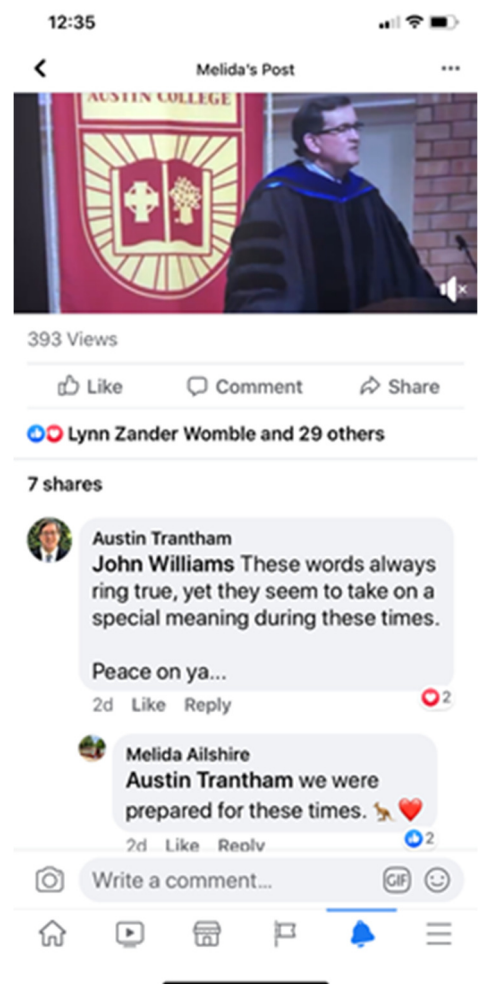
"We were prepared for these times."

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That reminds me of a Bible story (but then, most things do).

2 Kings 2:1-14 is a great story about

- the end of the career of the Prophet Elijah and
- the beginning of a new chapter in the career of the Prophet Elisha.



*1 Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah
up to heaven by a whirlwind,
Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.*

God is about to bring Elijah to heaven. He's the only character in the Bible who doesn't die. He was a major figure in ancient Israel and his impending departure is a huge and scary issue for the whole faith community.

Earlier in 1 and 2 Kings we learned that God's gonna come get Elijah and it's gonna happen in the Promised Land.

Elisha knows what's about to happen.

He also knows he will be Elijah's successor and so he wants to stay with him. The prospect of his new responsibilities seems to be weighing heavily on Elisha.

*2 Elijah said to Elisha,
"Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel."
But Elisha said,
"As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."
So they went down to Bethel.*

Elisha doesn't want to abandon Elijah. He's not ready to start the next chapter of his life yet.

*3 The company of prophets who were in Bethel
came out to Elisha, and said to him,
"Do you know that today the Lord
will take your master away from you?"
And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."*

Elisha doesn't want to talk about it. He's anxious about the changes he knows are coming.

*4 Elijah said to him,
"Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho."
But Elisha said,
"As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live,
I will not leave you."
So they came to Jericho.*

Same thing Elisha said in verse 2

5 *The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him,
"Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?"
And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."*

It's like Elisha has his hands over ears saying "LA! LA! LA! LA!"

6 *Then Elijah said to him,
"Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan."
But he said,
"As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.*

7 *Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan.*

8 *Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.*



[*Mantle, n.* – a symbol of authority and God's presence—ED].

In the context of 2 Kings, the fact that the waters of the Jordan parted when Elijah touched the river with his mantle is evidence of God's presence with him.

9 *When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha,
"Tell me what I may do for you,
before I am taken from you."*

That's a really nice gesture from the old guy to the young guy.

*Elisha said,
"Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."*

This Elisha essentially saying "I know you're about to go, and I'm gonna be left here with a bunch of new responsibilities. I'd sure like to have twice as much of whatever little *sumpin'-sumpin'* you've got that makes you you."

That reminds me a little bit of somebody trying to get their head around what it means to go from being a college *student* to being a college *graduate*.

"I'm gonna need all the help I can get."

10 *[Elijah] responded, "You have asked a hard thing;*

I love that line.

"Boy...you went there right away, didn't you, kid?"

Now watch what Elijah says next:

*yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you,
it will be granted you; if not, it will not."*

That's huge.

Elijah is telling Elisha, "You've got to face the change with your eyes wide open. If you don't recognize that things are not gonna be like they used to be, then I can't help you."

"You can't pretend that nothing has changed."

"You can't go back."

11 *As they continued walking and talking,
a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah
ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.*

12 *Elisha kept watching and crying out,
"Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"
But when he could no longer see him,
he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.*

Elisha is grieving.

His mentor is gone.

The context in which he ministers has changed forever.

Things will never again be like they used to be.

So he's standing there by himself,

Alone.

Trying to figure out what to do next.

13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him,

Remember, the mantle was the symbol of God's presence with Elijah.

***14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him,
and struck the water, saying,***

"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

When he had struck the water,

***the water was parted to the one side and to the other,
and Elisha went over.***

The mantle still worked!

Much had changed.

Things were not like they used to be.

But Elisha had not been abandoned.

The mantle still worked.

God was still there.

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Now let's think about Austin College in 2020.

Our individual lives and the life of our institution have completely changed.

Things are not like they used to be.

We have to face that change with our eyes wide open.

We have to get used to thinking about things like face masks and social distancing and remote learning.

Maybe for a *long* time.

We can't go back.

But we have not been abandoned.

We are not bereft.

[be·reft
/bē'reft/
adjective

1. deprived of or lacking something, especially a nonmaterial asset—ED.]

We've got what we need.

The mantle still works.

The values and commitments that got us all to this point in our individual lives and the life Austin College are the same ones that will enable us to adjust and prosper and thrive in this new situation.

Maybe that's the Gospel according to B.B. King:

It kinda feels like "it all came down," doesn't it?

But like the mantle that Elijah *and* Elisha used to part the waters of the Jordan River,



we'll still be around

being who we are

and doing what we do.

I think Melida and Austin are right.

We (all of us, #ROONation as a whole) *were* ready for these times.

And, to quote **Santos Botello's** prayer from Baccalaureate, "we're ready for whatever is next."

Two things are true:

Everything has changed.

and

What got us here will get us through.

The mantle still works.

We'll still be around.

Count on it.

Until Next Time, I remain,
Just Another Cowboy Preacher,
Touching the Waters and Preparing to Cross,

JOHN WILLIAMS

Chaplain

AUSTIN COLLEGE ZOOM COMMUNION WORSHIP

We will continue our weekly Zoom Communion services throughout the Summer. All Austin College students, Alumni, Staff, Faculty and friends are welcome to participate. Those who wish to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will need to secure their own elements (bread and wine or grapejuice). Respond to this email if you'd like a program for the service.

Here's the Zoom invitation:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://austincollege.zoom.us/j/92048650575?pwd=ZjZUOW5yYWxhOHVtTHRONW8wb1RqZz09>

Meeting ID: 920 4865 0575

Password: 349123

Hope to see you there.