

College in pandemic times

Students returned to the Goshen College campus with new procedures and guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19. President Rebecca Stoltzfus welcomed students - some in the church-chapel, but most joining virtually - to the 2020-21 academic year during a convocation, in which she spoke about passionate learning during a pandemic.

She spoke about her experience as a new student at Goshen College 42 years ago, waffling between majors, but ultimately learning that whatever she chose, it would involve hard work. She talked about her passions, including keeping students safe, anti-racism work, creating honest conversations in our community, and cultivating a deep sense of joy, vibrant faith and fun. She also discussed what the upcoming year will look like, and how it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to keep each other safe. Following the convocation, students took part in a physically-distanced version of the annual applause tunnel, a 20-year tradition with a cheering tunnel formed by faculty and staff, then seniors, juniors, sophomores and finally the first-year students.

Conference connections

This academic year we have 6 students enrolled from five Mosaic Mennonite Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$17,500 in congregational student aid for the academic year. The Goshen College Church Aid Matching Grant program provides a dollar-for-dollar match of the first \$1,000 per student and a 1:4 match after that, up to full tuition.

2020-21 Campus ministries theme

Upon reflecting on this academic year's campus-wide core value, passionate learners, I gave some thought about how that could be applied to our faith. At Goshen College, we want our students, faculty, and staff to learn, listen, work, and pray with passion. What does all this passion lead to? I believe it leads to something vibrant, or rather, a vibrant sort of

faith, which is the Campus Ministries theme for 2020-2021.

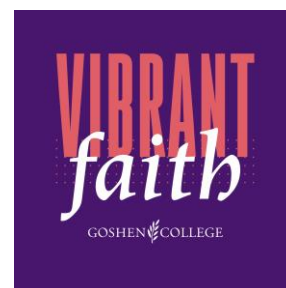
John 10:10 says "The thief only comes to steal and destroy, but I come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (NIV) In an academic year that is surely like none other, what does it mean to have life "to the full?"

This is where I make the connection to vibrant faith. Many of us are looking for a faith that is able to withstand obstacles, overcome adversity, and weather storms. However, to truly have that kind of spirituality one would almost need to have a "perfect" faith. I don't think that's what God is looking for. A vibrant faith adapts to adversity. A vibrant faith looks to community for help in overcoming obstacles. And when storms come, a vibrant faith knows when to take shelter, or "lie low to the ground" as John O'Donoghue says, and wait until the tumult has passed.

A vibrant faith isn't perfect, but we aren't a perfect people. A vibrant faith is passionate, strong, courageous, and has endurance. This doesn't mean it never falters, never grows weak, or is never strained. A vibrant faith is a commitment to keep coming back.

As we move forward in this academic year, may our "passionate" learning give way to vibrant faith, and in its vibrance, serve as a light to others.

-Joanne Gallardo, Campus Pastor



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