



THE HOUGHTON STAR

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SGA Elections: Savage Wins Plurality, But Not the Presidency

By William Airhart

After more than 500 votes cast – easily the largest recorded turnout in SGA history – Peter Savage received more votes than any other candidate for SGA President, but failed to garner the outright majority needed to win Wednesday's election outright.

The races for the positions of Vice President, Chaplain, Commissioner of Communications, and college senator were also decided.

The SGA Constitution stipulates that the SGA President must win a majority of votes (50% + 1) in order to win. Joshua Nolen, Savage and Matthias Williams all competed in this year's

election, and each had enough strength to prevent any other candidate from garnering 50% of the total student vote. Savage won the most votes, taking home 39.2% of the vote. Nolen finished second with 32.9% of the total vote, and Williams finished with 22.2%.

Elyse Drum, serving as Election Commissioner, was thrilled with student voter turnout. "We shattered our previous record for voting totals," she said. "It is very gratifying to see all of our hard work finally come to fruition in such a big way."

Savage will now face Nolen in a run-off election in two weeks' time on Tuesday, March 18. "The first stage of

this election has shown that students want a candidate that will fight for their interests in the coming year," said Savage on Wednesday evening. "Today's results demonstrate that honesty, integrity and communication are very important to students."

In his comments following the election, Nolen was grateful that so many Houghton students had chosen to participate in Houghton's political process. "I am both surprised and excited by how many people turned out for the election," he said. "I'm glad that Houghton students are taking an interest in SGA politics and student issues. After today's election, we are one step closer, but we still have a lot

of work to accomplish."

Because of the timing of the next round of elections, neither Savage nor Nolen will be eligible for participation in next year's SGA, barring a presidential appointment. Williams, however, still has the option to compete for a senatorial position as representative of next year's senior class.

Both Savage and Nolen complimented Williams on his candidacy. "I thanked Matthias for his decision and have urged him to run as a class senator," said Nolen following the election. "He has assured me that he will." Savage offered similar sentiments, commenting, "I hold Matthias in the

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Ron Mahurin Announced As Houghton's Next Academic Dean

By Joel VanderWeele

After almost two years of searching, Houghton has announced that it will name Dr. Ronald Mahurin the new Academic Vice President and Dean of the College. According to the official announcement made on the Houghton College website on February 25, Mahurin will begin work in this important leadership role on August 1.

In the absence of a permanent Vice President and Dean of the College (a title often shortened to Academic Dean), Daryl Stevenson and Darlene Bressler have been sharing the duties of the Dean's Office. As Stevenson says, the primary role of the Academic Dean is to "oversee the faculty in general,"

which includes "faculty recruiting and hiring, faculty growth and development issues around rank and tenure, and the college curriculum." The Dean also "chairs significant policy-making and decision-making committees, leads the faculty meetings, and is responsible directly to the President. There are more than three dozen on-campus and off-campus program directors, department chairs, and budget managers who report directly to this office."

The faculty elected a search committee to find a new Academic Dean at the faculty retreat in August of 2006. "It was one of the first things we started when I was appointed," said President Shirley Mullen. Initially, Stevenson chaired the search committee, but

"when Dr. Stevenson moved into the Dean's office, his responsibilities there made it necessary for [the committee] to appoint a new chair... this past summer [2007] President Mullen asked me to take the position," said Doug Gaerte, Professor of Communications.

The job of the faculty-elected search committee is to identify candidates for the position and make recommendations to the President, who makes the final decision about whom to hire. In this case, however, Mahurin actually first contacted the President last fall. As Mullen said, "He wanted to get back to a college and Houghton was one of the places he considered" because it is where "Christian liberal arts [is] being done at a very high level." While

Houghton was looking for a candidate to fill the position, Mahurin was seeking "to get back to an institution where education is still very much at the grass roots."

So when Mullen knew that Mahurin was interested in the position, she passed along the resume to Gaerte as chair to help organize the process. "[The search committee] decided he was someone worth pursuing," said Mullen. "I've worked very closely with the search committee. In my view, a Dean of the college is someone about whom you want the President and the faculty to be equally excited about."

The committee first met with Mahurin last fall when he visited Houghton

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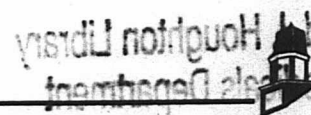
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WORLD OUT THERE

By Thomas Lerew

Campaign Update

This week brought primaries in Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas and Vermont for both parties. Senator McCain won all contests for the Republicans, putting him past the magic number of delegates to make him the presumptive nominee. Governor Huckabee promptly conceded defeat and withdrew from the race. President Bush is expected to make a formal endorsement of McCain soon. On the Democratic side, Senator Clinton won primary contests in Ohio, Rhode Island and Texas, while Senator Obama picked up Vermont. When we went to press, the results of the Texas caucuses had not yet been determined.

New President of Cuba

Forty-nine years after his triumphal takeover of the island of Cuba, Fidel Castro has decided to give up power as president. His statement, given to a state-sponsored newspaper, offered strong support for his brother Raul to takeover. The Cuban parliament promptly followed those wishes instating Raul as the new president. Fidel outlasted and frustrated ten different U.S. presidents seeking his ouster. Many Cuban Americans hope that Raul's economic policies may be more open-minded and that they might improve the daily lives of Cuban citizens.

Columnist William F. Buckley, Jr. Dies

Called the most "consequential" columnist in recent history, conservative voice William F. Buckley, Jr. died last week at his desk working on a book at age 82. The founder of National Review magazine and TV show "Firing Line," Buckley was a controversial and outspoken critic of American liberalism and was heralded by the right to have "legitimized conservatism as an intellectual movement and therefore as a political movement." Buckley is said to have been one of the backbone supporters and influencers behind the election of President Ronald Reagan.

Venezuela Military Tactics Spark Signs of War

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez massed troops, tanks and fighter jets on the border of Columbia this week threatening to overthrow U.S.-supporter Colombian President Alvaro Uribe after Colombian troops crossed Venezuela's border to kill a key Marxist rebel leader. The rebel was a leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, an organization striving to establish a revolutionary state in Columbia. It has been said that Chavez was financially supporting the FARC leader in return for their support of him as a political prisoner over a decade ago.

N.Y. Philharmonic Tours North Korea

The North Korean government permitted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, its staff and numerous journalists (a 300-member delegation) to enter its country on a 48-hour musical tour. The experience is heralded as an important diplomatic breakthrough as many felt that the ensemble symbolically brought the two nations together. The orchestra's concert was broadcast to the nation on state-sponsored TV and radio. "I am a musician and not a politician. Music has always traditionally been an arena, an area where people make contact. It's neutral, it's entertainment, it's person to person," Philharmonic Conductor Lorin Maazel said.

Kenyan Leaders Agree to Share Power

Kenyan presidential rivals signed a deal last Thursday that would create a shared power government structure in an attempt to bring the two-month crisis that has led to the deaths of over 1,000 Kenyans and injured the nation's economy. The agreement signed into law by newly elected President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga creates the position of prime minister to be filled by Mr. Odinga. The accord has been heralded by both the United Nations and African Union after weeks of talks.

New Sports Ministry In Buffalo

By Sandra Stark

Last month, members of the men's and women's Houghton soccer teams helped kick off a new indoor soccer league ministry associated with the Hope Refugee Service in Buffalo. As new players registered, the group utilized the gymnasium at the downtown Salvation Army to run a soccer clinic. The soccer program does not have an official name, but is supported by the combined efforts of a number of different organizations in the Buffalo area, including Peace of the City, the Salvation Army, several Wesleyan churches, and Houghton College.

Eleven students (seven men and four women) attended the big "kick-off" event. The day consisted of a clinic and meal, which lasted about three hours. The students then led the participants in a number of five-a-side games for an additional hour. The day provided a fantastic opportunity for the Houghton students to interact with the kids and share some of their soccer expertise.

Over sixty kids attended the first clinic, exceeding the hopes of the organizers, and over ninety came the following week as participants spread the word about the program. The players range in age from six to seventeen and came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The program was brought to the attention of the Houghton College Physical Education department by 1979 Houghton graduate Russ Kingsbury. Kingsbury contacted Athletic Director Skip Lord, who in turn contacted the soccer coaches and players.

According to Kingsbury, there are similar programs utilizing basketball and football, but many needy refugee kids in Buffalo come from nations where soccer is the most popular sport. As such, this new soccer league has caused much excitement in Buffalo, an area that is home to many refugee families.

David Lewis, coach of the women's soccer team, said the intent of the program is to "to find something that

will help to build a 'connection' with these kids and their families as a means to love and care for them." He explained, "Soccer is a game that [the refugees] have been accustomed to playing - a 'universal language' that opens doors for communication and building relationships."

Lewis coordinated Houghton students' efforts to provide coaching and mentoring. The volunteering will be based upon each individual's desire to become involved and will provide the players with "a new chance to minister to the poor by sharing life skills, teaching athletics, and mentoring."

Melissa Blosser, a Houghton College sophomore studying in Buffalo for the semester, is a regular volunteer for the program as a co-coach for a 9-to-12-year old team. "On Saturdays, I pick up some of our players and then we...run some drills and have a team huddle before the game starts," she said, describing the program. "The halves for the [younger] kids are...fifteen minutes and then there is an 'inspirational talk' at half time."

She emphasized that, while the league is run by a Christian group, "there are many different faiths represented in the kids that come to play, so the coaches focus on qualities like respect for other players and teamwork in these talks" rather than specific religious values. "It really is simply a safe space for the kids to be together and play a sport that they love," Blosser said, adding that she usually tries to "work it out so that our team can stay and cheer for the older kids, a lot of whom are older brothers, sisters, and cousins...the kids yell for their favorite players and often encourage a good play no matter which team made it."

Sophomore Daniel Brubaker, a varsity soccer player, was especially excited about this new program, because he has "a passion for soccer and a passion for making a difference in the lives of others. What better way to combine the two passions than through this program?"



• *New Dean continued from page 1*

with his family. In February, he came again for a formal interview, meetings with the staff, the President's Office, and the people who would report to him, and also participated in a forum for students and community members. Mahurin was the ninth candidate to have a face-to-face interview for the position and the fifth candidate for whom there was an open forum.

During the week that the final contract offer was extended, the faculty meeting was moved from Thursday to Monday. "I think it would be appropriate to indicate that the meeting was held early to clarify issues involving the Dean's Search," said Mullen about the shifted meeting. "It is clear that the new Dean is coming with enthusiastic support from both the faculty and the president. That is certainly the scenario that we all had hoped for when we started this process over a year and a half ago."

Gaerte seconded Mullen's comments, saying, "The main purpose of the meeting was for the President to have a clear sense of the level of faculty

support, and it was very strong." The minutes from this faculty meeting had not yet been posted by March 4, but anyone interested in the minutes from this or any other faculty meeting can access them through the Faculty Herald's posted on the Academic Dean's webpage.

One of the many reasons both the faculty and the President are enthusiastic about Mahurin joining the Houghton community is his breadth of experience. Mahurin is a graduate of Gordon College and received his M.A. and Ph.D in Political Science from Miami University (Ohio). He has served as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Westmont College, Assistant and tenured Associate Professor of Political Science at Gordon College, Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations at Gordon College, and Vice President of Professional Development and Research for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU). Mahurin has also written and contributed to many books, articles, and reviews on such

varied topics as "Civic Education in American Churches and Other Faith-based Institutions," "Evangelicals and Foreign Policy: Perspectives on Peacemaking," and "Muslim Studies in the Christian College Classrooms." Gaerte commented, "We are very fortunate to have someone like him."

As well as being extremely well qualified for the position, Mahurin is well-connected within the world of Christian higher education. "He knows practically every President and Academic Dean in the CCCU," said Gaerte. President Mullen was

especially excited that Mahurin can help to "bring Houghton into the world of Christian higher education and academia in general... He can definitely help us join the conversation."

In his application for the position of Academic Dean, Mahurin was asked to answer some questions about the Christian liberal arts. He shadowed many of President Mullen's comments from a chapel speech from last semester, writing, "The student who graduates from a Christian liberal arts college ought to be one who has been mentored and trained to 'ask the big questions' regarding life—without fear of where those questions may lead them." He also stated that a "quality Christian liberal arts education will be grounded in an ethic of hope... This ethic of hope should not lead us to some romanticized notion of optimism, which believes that things will get better if we only work harder, pray harder, or think harder. Rather, an ethic of hope confronts the sin and brokenness of our world.... That ethic, lived out, will compel us to think harder, to pray harder, and to work harder—not because we have anything to prove to the world (from the standpoint of prestige or 'success'), but because we ultimately have confidence in the One in whom all things hold together."

Mahurin does not currently belong to

the Wesleyan church, but will officially join the Wesleyan church before taking the position. Houghton policy dictates that the Academic Dean, College President, and Chair of the Religion Department must all be Wesleyans. According to President Mullen, Mahurin's religious background is

Mahurin believes that a Christian liberal arts education should be "grounded in an ethic of hope... [that] compels us to think, pray, and work harder."

"very eclectic... he is particularly interested in a personal commitment of faith and social action... He's not just doing this to get the job." In particular, Mahurin's emphasis on social justice matches the Wesleyan faith well.

As evidence of his belief in social activism, Mahurin's personal statement pointed out that he is "currently working with *Evangelicals for Human Rights*, a group of scholars, social activists, policy analysts and other evangelical leaders. [Their] work is to strengthen evangelical commitments to human rights and to gain evangelical support for the concrete policy measures necessary to prevent the use of torture."

It is with great enthusiasm from both the faculty and the President that Houghton College is hiring Dr. Mahurin to fill this important position, and according to Mullen, "If a Deanship is going to work well, the Dean should be equally committed to both groups." As a show of support, "He has been offered tenure, but his tenure is as a university professor, not tied to any particular department," said Gaerte. This gives him a higher level of job security and authority without upsetting the order of departments in line for new hires. In Gaerte's view, "A Dean should have tenure. We don't want someone representing the faculty to the board not to have it." President Mullen's hope is that with the help of Mahurin, "Houghton will be much more present in the church, higher education, and the world."

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utmost respect for his positions on increasing both student input and involvement on this campus."

Williams was gracious in defeat, and thanked the other candidates for a race well run. "I hope students will continue to critically examine the issues facing the college, and the platforms and stances of both candidates," he said in a statement. "Best of luck to both candidates in the continued race, and congratulations to the other election winners!"

Multiple events were hosted in the lead-up to Wednesday's election. On Monday night, all candidates delivered short speeches to an audience of 10-15

students outlining their platforms for the coming year. On Tuesday night, however, a much larger gathering of students attended a debate in the Campus Center between the SGA Presidential candidates, hosted by Shenawana Hall. More than one hundred students paused to listen to the candidates posture for pole position in the following day's election.

The debate was cordial, with each candidate fielding questions on topics as diverse as student judicial policy and their perceived weaknesses as candidates. Williams described the election as setting the tone for a "year of change" for the student body. Nolen agreed, calling it a "very important

election." "I'm honestly afraid," Nolen admitted, "that we might lose what we've accomplished over the past two years. We need... to put these ideas into practice." Savage emphasized the need for the SGA President to "set the tone" of the student body, stating that he was ready to "lead and labor" in the year ahead.

Looking forward, both Savage and Nolen were confident of their chances of victory in two weeks' time. "I still believe that I am the best candidate for the job of SGA President," stated Nolen. "If my campaign organizes itself, I have a good chance of winning." On the other side, Savage was encouraged to have received the most votes in the first round of voting. "I'm thankful that the student body chose to support me in such a strong fashion," he said. "I look forward to representing the student body in the upcoming year."

On Wednesday, the student body also cast votes for the position of SGA college senator. Michael Danylak, Ryan Ledebur, Stephen Ross, Clara Sanders, Adele Cameron, Nathaniel Lockhart, Timothy Chen, and Justin Zaner were elected to the eight positions that were available. Stephen Ross will be new to the Senate next year, and was pleased to have been elected on his first foray into student government.

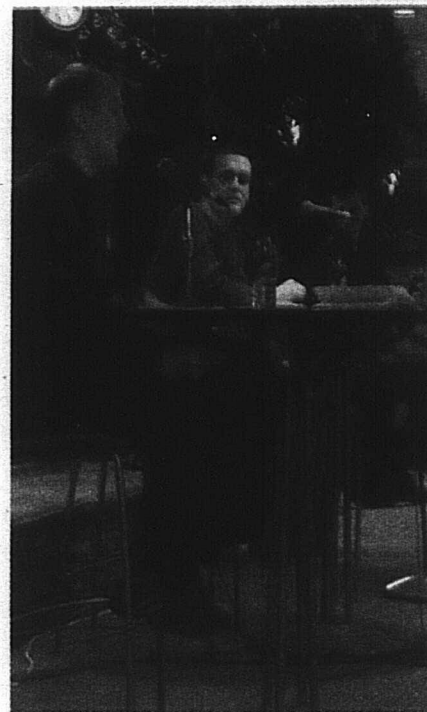


Photo by Elyse Drum

The candidates square off in Tuesday's debate.

"I thank everyone for their votes and look forward to serving in the 65th Senate," he commented. "Feel free to come up to me with ideas and concerns as we continue our careers here at Houghton."

Jonathan Brooks was elected Commissioner of Finance, beating out strong competition from Marc Williams. Additionally, Jennifer Steinhoff was elected Commissioner of Communications, and Susanna Thomford-Garner was elected Chaplain. Both were unopposed.

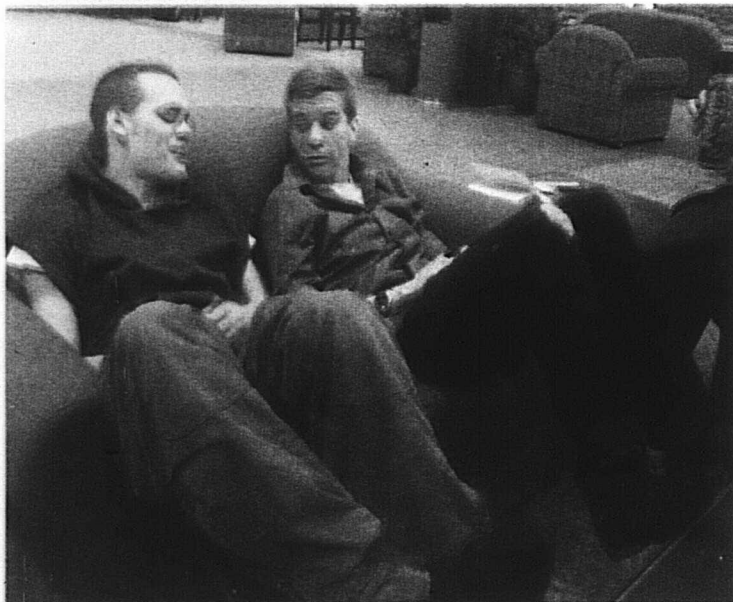


Photo by Elyse Drum

Joshua Nolen and Peter Savage relax after casting their votes on Weds. morning.

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Despite Retirement, Brenneman Always a Part of *Our Town*

By Jason Fisher

Next weekend Bruce Brenneman will direct his last performance at Houghton College, as he is set to retire at the end of the academic year. For this final production, Professor Brenneman will once again be directing Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.

Our Town is a three-act play set in a small New Hampshire town in the early 1900's. The Stage Manager, played by Dr. Dave Brubaker, is the main character of the story. Serving as a narrator of sorts, the Stage Manager guides the audience through the lives of George Gibbs (Shane Marcus) and Emily Webb (Hannah Norris). Each act serves to portray a different phase in their relationship with the first act representing daily life, the second love and marriage, and the third life and death.

The show is unique for a number of reasons, including the Stage Manager's interaction with the audience, and its minimal set and limited use of props. One thing that makes *Our Town* so popular is its broad appeal. The wide scope of the play was, in fact, one reason why Brenneman chose it as his last show. "It resonates with so many people," said Brenneman. Brenneman also has a personal affection for the show, claiming that *Our Town* has "long been my favorite drama, both for the poignancy and universality of its message as well as the understated staging."

For this final spring production, Brenneman has decided to utilize adults who were in his productions as college or high school students. This isn't the first time that Brenneman has decided to cast past performers. Last semester, Professor Dave Perkins recreated his role of Grandpa in the fall production of *You Can't Take It With You*. Perkins is back this semester to take on the role of Mr. Webb. When asked about the decision to incorporate other Houghton



Photo By Micah Warf

Brad Wilber, far right, conducts the choir during rehearsal in his role as Simon Stimson.

community members besides students, Brenneman replied, "I felt that it would add a special dimension to the last two productions and I think the work Dave Perkins did in the fall semester proved the point." Joining Perkins and Brubaker as non-student performers is Brad Wilber, playing the role of Simon Stimson, and Steve Pocock, performing as Dr. Gibbs. Having worked with all of these people before, Brenneman commented, "These individuals did a superb job the first time around I wanted to give them an opportunity to do so again."

Of course, there are highlights among the student performers as well. Hannah Norris, who first stepped on stage at the age of nine, has impressed all of her fellow cast members with her portrayal of Emily Webb. The role of Emily is indeed a challenge, and Norris admitted, "When I was initially cast as Emily, I was terrified." Norris explained how she tackled the role, commenting, "It would be easy to go over the top with her, but it is the truth the character projects that makes her so emotional, not by acting emotionally." Other students involved

in this semester's production of *Our Town* include Kristen Speiser and Cana Roth.

The particular significance behind this production, however, goes beyond the cast of characters and storyline of *Our Town*. With the retirement of Professor

Bruce Brenneman, the college is losing the face of Houghton theater. Most students who have worked under him share the same sentiments as Norris when she noted that "to be involved in any of his productions at all is an honor." Those involved in Brenneman's final production have described it as an incredible privilege. Ever humble, when asked about his time at Houghton, Brenneman couldn't help but credit others, saying, "There are so many people who have contributed to the drama program at Houghton that I could not possibly start naming individuals." Brenneman describes the prospect of leaving Houghton as bittersweet, but looks forward to seeing how the drama program progresses at Houghton.

Our Town will be performed at the Rosemary Tysinger Auditorium on March 13, 14, and 15 and 7:30 P.M. Additionally, there will be a matinee showing at 1:30 P.M. on March 15. For information or ticket reservations, contact Bruce Brenneman at (585) 567-9461.

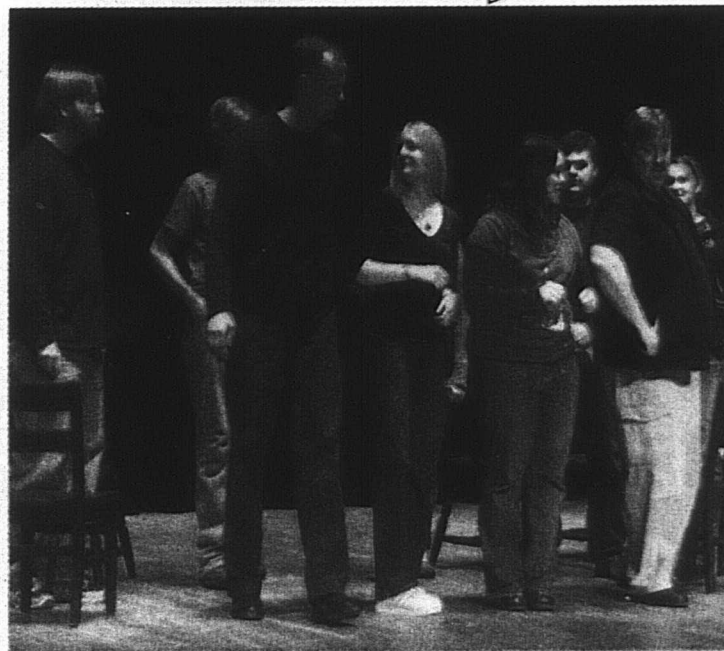


Photo By Micah Warf

Dave Perkins, third from left, returns to the stage as the character of Mr. Webb.



MercySeat Ministries Celebrates Seven Years of College Service

Rather than seeing this milestone merely as a reason to reflect on God's past faithfulness, the president of MercySeat looks ahead to the future of the ministry.

By Tineke Hegeman

Wednesday, February 20 marked seven consecutive years of prayer every weeknight on the Houghton campus. Not only is this a significant milestone for MercySeat Ministries, which has inherited this seven-year-old ministry, but it serves as a marker and light among colleges in the nation. No other college campus in the United States has a student-led prayer ministry

as developed and consistent as the one at Houghton, and no other has been sustained for such a length of time.

Inspired by King David's dedication of resources for the construction of the temple, the heart-cry of those who gathered for this anniversary was, "Who are we, and who are the students who have gone before us, that we should have been able to give to You as generously as this? Everything comes from You!" (1 Chron. 29:14,

paraphrased). While the past seven years have witnessed many joys and much pain, many challenges and much grace for this small ministry of weak and broken students, the Lord has chosen to sustain it longer than anyone could have reasoned possible. This is sobering to the MercySeat community as it would seem that the Lord has given Houghton a charge for prayer in worship and intercession where many other colleges have faltered.

At this milestone, then, reflections on past faithfulness help to provide a vision for the future as students remember and pray that God would "keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of [His] people forever!" (1 Chron. 29:10). In it, God's people gather together to tell the stories of His faithfulness.

This anniversary, beginning as a small dream on the part of the current student leaders of MercySeat Ministries, turned into much more than they asked for or imagined. Fifteen former Houghton student leaders traveled as much as 18 hours to attend and many community members came to rejoice. An extended service of thanksgiving was followed by a time of feasting and testimony to God's faithfulness. Thursday morning, students, both present and past, gathered to recommit themselves to the vision of praying persistently for the movement of God's Spirit in Houghton and across the earth. It was a time of fellowship with a microcosm of Houghton generations, encouraging one another and rejoicing together.

Also in attendance were many leaders from various expressions of prayer which happen across the campus and community, from organized ministries like GCF to faithful men and women who have met with their own prayer groups for many years. There was a

strong sense of the Spirit moving in a way larger than any solitary individual or lone ministry could ask, think or even imagine.

As part of this global participation in the life of the kingdom, the desire of MercySeat is to live in the same spirit as King David, who organized 24/7 prayer and worship in the tabernacle as

In this unique time and locale, MercySeat continues to equip hearts to go into the world from this place, proclaiming the glory of God.

he longed and worked for the construction of a permanent dwelling place for God in the earth.

MercySeat endeavors to sustain unceasing prayer and worship by encouraging not only meetings, but

lifestyles of spiritual vibrancy and discipline. This desire is primarily expressed through corporate times of prayer, which are held in Presser Hall from 9 to 11 pm each weeknight and finds other expression in cultivating fasting, exhortation, and fellowship within community.

In this unique time and locale in life, as a student at an institution committed for more than a hundred years to an authentic and academic expression of Christianity, MercySeat continues to equip hearts to go into the world from this place, praying and proclaiming the faithfulness and glory of a God who does not relent from pursuing the hearts of His people. And, by the mercies of God, the next seven years will see many colorful and expectant generations of students continuing to gather for fifteen minutes or an hour, once a week or daily, joining with David, the Israelites, and past generations of students who "rejoice" in everything "given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord" (1 Chron. 29:9) toward the house of prayer which Jesus continues to build in the temples of our hearts.

Tineke is a senior Writing major and serves as MercySeat president.

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The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 350 words or fewer and be submitted by Tuesday at 12 p.m. to

STAR@houghton.edu.

Names may be withheld upon request.



Letter To The Editor

Dear Editors:

While so many people talk about chapel attendance and the right chapel attitude around campus, it seems to me that many people don't really think of their actions while inside the John and Charles Wesley chapel. My focus for this argument is the amount of applause in the average chapel service. Some chapels are more like lectures than worship services, and I certainly believe it is appropriate to applaud these speakers, but do we really endorse the idea of clapping for a praise song? A sermon? A prayer?

What does this act of repeatedly slapping our hands together say about us? I am inclined to believe that it is a mixture of being overly polite (a trend prevalent on most Christian college campuses) and simply going through the motions of chapel. I, for one, am likely to react differently to a meditation on a Psalm than to a lecture on the benefits of free trade. When was the last time you clapped at the completion of a sermon in church?

I believe that we are too caught up in the individual contributions of each person on stage and wind up losing sight of the purpose behind those contributions. We want to let the people know how well they did, but in doing so, we forget about who they are doing it for (hint: it's not us). If our applause were an expression of praise to God, I would have absolutely no problem with it, but my suspicion is that we are reacting more to the performances of a set of individuals than to the joy we feel during our time dedicated to God.

Joel VanderWeele, Class of 2010

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From the Editors' Desk...

I Can Only Imagine... Tears In Heaven?

If heaven is anything like many contemporary praise songs describe it, I'm not so sure I'd like to be involved.

By Katarina Kieffer

I'll be the first to admit that I'm not exactly what one would call an extremely religious person; the past few years of my life have taught me to be increasingly wary of my thoroughly evangelical upbringing, and I've always been one to question quite liberally everything I'm told, regardless of the authority of the person instructing me. These days, I find my inspiration in what most would see as essentially non-religious places, like art museums or concert halls; the church building, regrettably, has never been a place where my creative or thinking self found much room for expression.

The other day, however, I had an incredible realization while engaging in a widely accepted "Christian" activity: listening to a Christian radio station while driving to church. "I Can Only Imagine," a song that normally only induces mild feelings of distaste at the thought of how completely overplayed it is, caused me to panic slightly as I stopped, inspired to ponder my future (and by future, I mean my hopefully very distant future). "I can only imagine," the artist croons to Jesus, "when I all I will do is forever, forever worship You." He's obviously talking about getting to heaven, seeing Jesus, and being so overcome that he spends the rest of forever worshipping at the feet of his savior.

Now, I know this initially sounds fine. In fact, most Christians would probably think this sounds perfect, if the rapturous way in which this song is sung during praise services is any indication. For me, it presents troubling implications. When I think of what I learned of heaven as a child, two "images" come to mind. The first is purely descriptive - I recall mention of streets of gold, rivers of crystal, and city gates made out of enormous gemstones, words that never failed to

conjure images of gaudy Las Vegas casinos to my young, already somewhat cynical mind.

The second "image" is more complex: more of a feeling than a concrete mental picture. Many older Christians in my life (whom I respect greatly) often speak longingly of heaven as an "end" of sorts, a point of completion: the end of all pain and suffering, the end of change as we know it. If it is a beginning, it is merely a beginning to an eternity of something they're not really sure of - that's not the important point, after all. We're strangers in this world, they say, and heaven is our true home. We'll get to see everyone we've lost again, things will be as they were meant to be, and we'll

all spend eternity...

doing what exactly?

This is where it gets troubling for me. If heaven is really going to be nothing more than singing praise songs to Jesus and strolling around a pleasure garden of jewel-encrusted trees of life, I would, quite frankly, like to opt out. If there is nothing of value to do, I simply see nothing desirable about it. Furthermore, this doesn't even seem to fit with the entire pattern of Scripture: even in Eden, the man and the woman had work to do - there was something to be accomplished, a possibility for improvement and progress. God is, after all, an inherently creative being, and his creation (specifically humanity) is endowed with that same creative potential. It doesn't seem at all likely that the reunification of humanity with God is going to be something like a never-ending Christian summer camp; I cannot believe in a God that would allow beings he created expressly to be creative to become stagnate.

Let me clarify: I am not in any way attempting to reject the idea of heaven

(although I'm a bit more unclear on hell). I realize that most people would not, upon reflection, characterize heaven in this (obviously) negative way, and most would insist that's not how their words were meant to be taken. The word "worship" is at the heart of the problem; it's come to be understood as nothing more than a musical expression of one's love for a deity, an unfortunate reduction of a word that properly implies an entire lifestyle.

So if I am aware of all of this, what exactly is the issue? I am simply calling attention to a problem that the church has become far too lax about confronting: our language, insufficient

as it is to express spiritual truth, can often obscure rather than facilitate understanding. True, our words can only capture facets of the infinite nature of the concept we

refer to as God. It may seem petty to critique a praise song; it's only one person's attempt to express what they understand of God, after all. But we live in a world where much of what we believe is determined, not by a historically developed catechism or some structured lecture on church doctrine, but by what we choose as entertainment. Our words matter more than ever, and the Christian church more than any other institution ought to be constantly attempting to express as much of the complexity of the faith as possible. The church cannot simply pander to an entertainment culture in an attempt to "win" more souls; Christianity doesn't reduce well - it was never meant to.

Katarina is a junior Political Science and Humanities double major and serves as associate editor.



featured
artwork

SUSANNA
ADDISON



Fallen From The Sky, mixed media

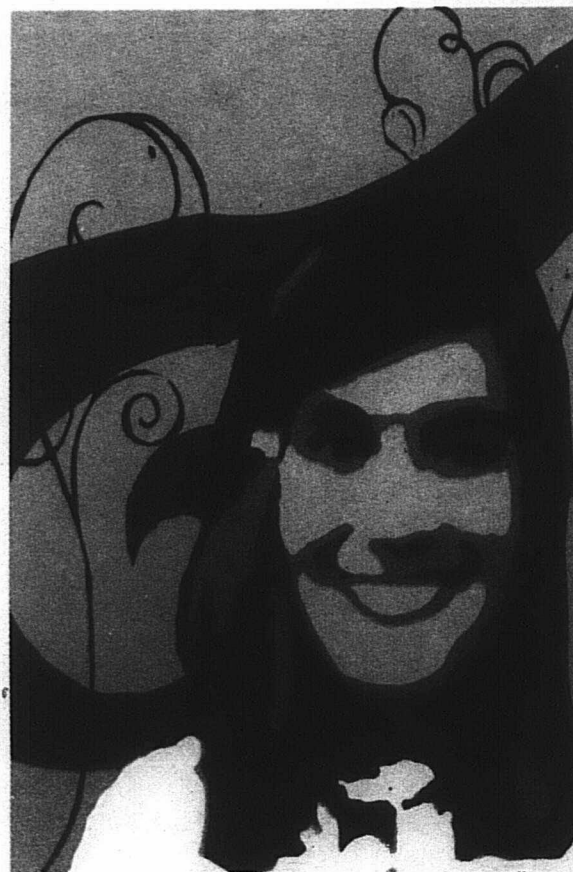
Note from the artist:

"Fallen From the Sky" is a mixed media piece that incorporates digital imaging and silk screening together in one print. It is about daring to imagine that things can be different from the way they are. It's about trying to find yourself. It's about always being on the outside looking in.

"Cassie" is a silkscreened print in memory of a very close friend and was a gift

for her after her death in January. Cassie's unique personality and her ability to share her happiness and joy with everyone who knew her was the inspiration for the piece.

Susanna is a junior Art major with a concentration in Graphic Design.



Cassie, silkscreen

SUDOKU
CHALLENGE

Submit completed puzzles with your name at the Star office. One correct puzzle will be selected at random and the winner will receive a Sudoku puzzle book!

6	3	4	7	1	2	9	8	5
7	9	5	8	6	4	3	1	2
8	2	1	3	9	5	4	6	7
5	6	2	1	3	8	7	4	9
9	1	3	6	4	7	2	5	8
4	7	8	2	5	9	1	3	6
1	8	6	9	2	3	5	7	4
3	5	9	4	7	6	8	2	1
2	4	7	5	8	1	6	9	3

WINNER!

Our lucky prize winner of a Sudoku puzzle book this week is
Johanna Hummelman

This week's puzzle is by Eric Liddle, a freshman Math and Computer Science major from Albion, N.Y.

Answer to last week's Sudoku puzzle is printed to the left.

1			7			4		
		4					2	
	9							5
3			4			1		
				1				
		5			8			7
7			2				5	
	6					8		
		2			3			9