

# THE HOUGHTON STAR

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## Drop in Enrollment Component of Financial Issues

### Three Financial Components Lead to "Perfect Storm"

by Kristen Palmer &  
Monica Sandreczki

Sharon Myers, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications here at Houghton, likened it to the perfect storm. She was referring to Houghton's latest financial state that appears to be in turmoil, especially after the College failed the U.S. Department of Education's most recent financial responsibility test.

The test, which requires that both non-profit and for-profit institutions complete annual financial statements demonstrating their abilities to handle financial responsibilities, determines whether or not each institution will be eligible to receive Title IV funding for the coming year. Each school is ranked on a scale

of -1 to 3 points, with scores below 1.5 considered failing and scores above 1.5 passing.

However, according to President Mullen, the endowment has already recovered enough so that if the ratios were recalculated today, Houghton would not appear on the list. Also, several of Houghton's sister schools such as Gordon, Malone, and Coe, also received failing scores.

According to Myers, the test is based on three criteria: loss of endowment, operating deficit, and assets to meet obligations. Houghton came out of the 2008-2009 test with a failing score of 1.4.

To an onlooker, it may appear that Houghton has gotten itself into a financial pickle, but there is

*Perfect Storm cont'd on page 2*

### Drop in Enrollment, but Houghton Remains Hopeful

by Renee Roberts

Edmund "Andy" Nelson came to Houghton for a variety of reasons – the East Meets West FYHP, the College's high moral and academic standards, and even the aesthetics of the school made a difference in his mind. Tyler Clayton became interested in Houghton because he wanted to get into cultures and languages and was drawn in by Houghton's slogan of "The world is our classroom." Houghton, Clayton said, produces "globally aware Christians and that's the kind of Christian [he wants] to be."

Nelson and Clayton are two of the 301 new students (incoming freshman and transfer students) entering the Houghton community this year. While this number is lower than other years, the college

was not altogether surprised at the slight drop in enrollment.

Wayne MacBeth, Vice President of Enrollment Management and Church Relations, said the College was aware that the number of students enrolling this year would be lower than past years. He pointed to the economy for a large portion of this drop. Many families, MacBeth said, are questioning whether a private Christian liberal arts college is going to be "worth it" after four years. Also, more students are choosing to take a "gap year" in between high school and college, in order to make money, which could also contribute to the low number of enrolled students at Houghton this year.

While the enrollment is not

*Enrollment cont'd on page 3*

## CLEW Speaker Brings Attention to Today's Spiritual Famine

by Rebekah Hall

This year's Christian Life Emphasis Week (CLEW) speaker, Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., believed that there is a famine in the world today. Quoting Amos 8:11, "not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD," Kaiser asserts that the teaching of God's Word "seems to be in short supply today."

Kaiser's CLEW theme, "Revivals in the Bible," is fitting considering CLEW's history. Started as a revival movement by the Houghton Wesleyan church in the 1960s, CLEW eventually moved to Houghton College's campus and took place in the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Assisting in the start to the new school year, CLEW in the fall has always focused on recommitment and revival within the community. The spring CLEW, which eventually evolved into PRAXIS, had a more outward focus on discipleship and living out Christian faith in the

world. Both CLEW and PRAXIS are still run in conjunction with Houghton Wesleyan church; CLEW, however, is principally run by the church while Houghton College takes primary responsibility of PRAXIS.

CLEW, therefore, is not meant to be just another chapel to scan in to. Its purpose of recommitment and revival give it a prominent place at the beginning of the school year. While CLEW's name may be slightly misleading, as many speakers cannot commit to a full week of speaking, Dr. John Brittain explained that having CLEW extend for several days gives a speaker time to develop his or her themes and messages to the Houghton community. Such messages are meant to prepare the college spiritually for the coming year.

Pastor Wes Oden of Houghton Wesleyan had asked Kaiser to speak at CLEW for several years. Throughout his life, Kaiser has been the Academic Dean of

*CLEW cont'd on page 3*

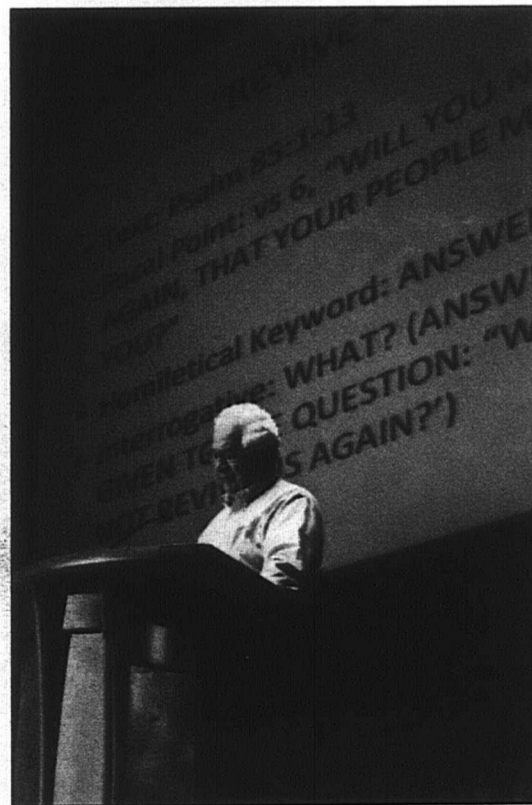


photo by Jordan Green

CLEW speaker, Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., speaks to Houghton about his theme "Revivals in the Bible."

# THE WORLD OF THERE

by Derek Schwabe

## Series of Attacks Continue to Rock Baghdad

Another series of bomb attacks and shootings in Baghdad, Iraq, killed at least five people and injured dozens on Wednesday. These bombings occurred three days after a more severe suicide attack on an Iraqi military complex also located in Baghdad. A vehicle packed with explosives was detonated and was quickly followed by a roadside bomb near a bus terminal in the south Baghdad neighborhood of Bayaa, killing two people. That same day, television journalist Sabah al-Khayat was "shot in front of his house in central Mosul while he was leaving for work." This attack marked the second consecutive murder of a journalist in Iraq this week. The media organization, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), has released a statement claiming that the journalist death toll for the conflict in Iraq has now surpassed that of any war since World War II. The country has remained in political limbo as no new government has formed since elections six months ago.

## US Church to "Go Ahead" with Koran Burning Event

Pastor Terry Jones of the Dove World Outreach Center in Florida has announced, despite enormous national warning and opposition, the intentions of his Church to "send a clear message to the radical element of Islam" by holding an international "Burn a Koran Day." Jones and his small congregation of 50 have already received international attention, sparking demonstrations in Afghanistan and Indonesia. National and global leaders including President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Pope

Benedict XVI, as well as US Military leaders in Afghanistan have expressed deep opposition to the decision. On Tuesday night, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said: "any type of activity like that that puts our troops in harm's way would be a concern." Church leadership told journalists that members planned to destroy several hundred copies of the Muslim holy book on the evening of Saturday, September 11, ignoring a city mandate not to hold an open air bonfire. Public decisions to destroy copies of the Koran in the past have been known to cause outbursts of violence and murder worldwide.

## Obama Emphasizes Economic Recovery this Week

In an attempt to expedite what he called a "painfully slow" US economic recovery process, President Obama announced early this week his intentions to implement a comprehensive infrastructure plan. The plan will take aim at improving US road, rail and air transit systems, long considered lacking by government agencies and the American Society of Civil Engineers. Mr. Obama also introduced an entirely new proposal, the creation of a permanent infrastructure bank. This institution would exist to provide a more concentrated funding source for national and regional infrastructure projects. On Wednesday, the president expanded his announcement by revealing plans to permanently extend Bush-era tax cuts for middle class families while allowing those for individuals making over \$200,000 a year and households making more than \$250,000 a year to expire. These announcements come in the wake of a crucial election season, which Obama acknowledged is surrounded by nation-wide economic worry.

## Perfect Storm Cont'd from page 1

more to the story than meets the eye.

According to Myers, there were three contributing factors to Houghton's struggles — loss of endowment, a significant drop in enrollment, and the delay in the buying transaction of the College's West Seneca campus.

Endowment took a heavy hit in the 2008-2009 academic year, and the College is working to recover that money as the economy slowly picks up. That, combined with the drop in enrollment, along with the drawn-out process of selling the West Seneca property, has led to this so-called "perfect storm," putting Houghton in a tough position, and forcing the leaders of the college to make a few difficult decisions over the summer.

Although Houghton expected a drop in enrollment due to the poor economy, it did not plan for such a severe drop, which was not fully realized until mid-May and June.

According to Mullen, a 60-70 student drop translates to an approximately \$1.1 million shortfall in the 2010-2011 budget, revenue that would typically come from tuition. The College decided to detract two-thirds of this money from operating costs and, although a tough decision, one-third from staff compensation.

According to Dale Wright, Executive Director of Human Resources and Administration, all staff members' and administrators' (employees without faculty status) salaries were reduced.

"The reduction was applied systematically," he said. "Staff members were split into three categories based on their salaries, with those staff members with lower salaries receiving smaller percentages of reduction."

"It is the case that we made some decisions this summer to roll back the base of some of the salaries and that concerns people because that is not a typical action the College has taken to address financial concerns," said Mullen.

Mullen said that, typically, when there is a shortfall, positions, services, or compensation can be cut. She added that it seemed that salary modification rather than cutting positions or services was the better option because a college of 1200 students is still the primary goal. According to Mullen, "the priority was put on not doing something that affected the school long term and not doing something that affected students."

"We are committed to the education that we are trying to provide," said Myers. "We have a commitment as a college to not impact student programs and to not detract from the education we have promised to the students."

"This doesn't reflect a short term, panicked response, but is part of a long term vision," said Mullen, who added that this is a "thoughtful, not last minute, decision."

Mullen also said that, in addition to the staff receiving salary reductions, the presidential staff took voluntary cuts on top of voluntary reductions last year.

At the same time, however, the College recognized the great disadvantages of cutting the pay of dedicated staff members.

"This was a very difficult decision and one that was not taken lightly," said Myers.

As far as operating costs, according to Mullen and Myers, operations spending was less than the amount budgeted for it, so this year's budget was modified to reflect last year's spending.

As for the West Seneca campus buying transaction, the College does have an offer but is still in the process of finalizing the sale.

In the President's State of the College address in August, in which the overall message was "hopeful," Mullen stated that "in the year that the West Seneca campus sells, we will use part of the profit from that sale to partially restore salaries, perhaps in a one-time payment."

"We are still moving forward, but the transaction has not yet hit the books," said Myers.

Myers recognized these three components as together causing Houghton's difficult economic situation but attributes Houghton's failure to pass the latest financial responsibility test largely to the college's loss of endowment.

"We did not fail because we are in financial difficulty," she said. "It just comes down to endowment loss from the 2008-2009 year."

Failure is not a pattern of Houghton's, as the school received a score of 2.6 in the 2007-2008 year and a score of a perfect 3 in the 2006-2007 year. The college just recently underwent another audit, and all indications show that Houghton's next score will surpass the passing score of 1.5, according to Myers.

"We have had a strong record," she said, "but unfortunately, a lot of things happened at the same time, and the economy has not been kind."

According to Myers, Houghton has dealt with these issues head on and is working to better position the school to become even stronger as we move into the future. ★

*Enrollment Cont'd from page 1*

as high as usual, MacBeth proudly shared that Houghton College's retention is at an all-time high this year, hovering between 93 and 94 percent. He said that while enrollment is important, Houghton also puts an emphasis on retaining students until they graduate.

Despite the numbers, MacBeth and the College are optimistic about next year and the future. New strategies have been instituted, hoping to garner the attention of juniors and seniors in high school. "Ologie," a branding agency, was hired to redesign Houghton's literature, featuring slick graphics, brightly colored fonts, and numerous pictures of Houghton students. The literature speaks "more clearly about Houghton's educational experience," according to MacBeth. The newly redesigned literature will hopefully stand out at college fairs and other venues where prospective students encounter Houghton representatives.

Other strategies focus on encouraging students to visit

campus. Bus trips from Buffalo and Rochester allow students who may not otherwise have been able to visit campus to come, sit in on a class, eat in the cafeteria, and stay in the dorms overnight. Special Visit Days have been set aside as well for students interested in particular majors.

Houghton's students are also on the forefront of recruitment. Over the summer, current students received an e-mail that requested names of people who might be interested in hearing about Houghton. Other creative ventures to gain names involved Christian concerts hosted by Houghton, summer ministry teams, and even summer camps. Through these events, Houghton amassed a staggering 13,000 names of potential students to be contacted in the future. MacBeth was quick to congratulate and thank all the students who participated in the summer name giving, as well as the student tour guides, and telecounselors who interact with prospective students daily.

"We try hard to put students up front because they are the most effective ways to communicate clearly some of the great things at Houghton," he said. ★

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*CLEW Cont'd from page 1*

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and co-translator of I and II Samuel in the NIV. An Old Testament scholar, Dr. Kaiser has written numerous books and has spoken throughout the country.

The theme of revivals has been on Kaiser's heart and mind for several years now, and he has been praying for Christian colleges as he sees a spiritual famine and moral laxity across the country. His seven CLEW talks came from a book he wrote called *Revive Us Again*. These messages focus on 16 great moments and figures of revival found within the Old and New Testaments, such as the church of Thessalonica, King Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34, and John the Baptist. Kaiser's messages explored the ways God's people sought a restored relationship with God and the ways He brought about that change in their lives. While only God can bring a revival that will renew His people so that they can bless those around them, God's people must be ready and pray for such a change.

Throughout his messages, Kaiser emphasized the importance of teaching and following the Scriptures for true revival to take place; for Kaiser the Word of



photo by Jordan Green

**Jordan Green (above), senior, leads worship during one of the CLEW services, which focused on the dangers of spiritual famine.**

God is central to how Christians think and act. Without it comes spiritual famine and, according to Kaiser, we are in such a famine now. He "hopes this is the generation that will change that."

In concluding his final CLEW message on Wednesday, he asserted that he is "desperately worried from a human standpoint what will happen to these United States and the proclamation of the Gospel." It only takes a few to spark change, and Kaiser encouraged the Houghton community to seek a revival here and now.★



photo by Jordan Green

**Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. speaks to a couple of Houghton students outside of the official CLEW events.**



## Exploring Biblical Roots through Art: Gallery Hosts Work of Renowned Jewish Artists

by Hannah Jennings

Students, faculty, and community members conveyed their enthusiasm for the Ortlip Gallery's first display of the 2010-2011 season, "Talmud: the Art of Ben Zion and Marc Chagall", during Friday night's reception for the collection. Remarks from Houghton's Professor Jillian Sokso commenced the reception as Houghton formally welcomed the unique display of 42 prints from both artists.

Both Ben-Zion Weiman and Marc Chagall are considered to be two of the most important Jewish artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to be the host of their work is both an honor and a fascinating exposure. Through the depiction of Old Testament stories, Zion and Chagall offer commentaries on the texts of the Talmud, the collection of writings that make up Jewish civil and religious law.

The works of Ben-Zion and Chagall convey the poetic qualities of the Old Testament through powerfully representing personal impressions of biblical

figures and their stories. Student Alice Browning found value in appreciating the Jewish tradition, reflecting that "understanding the past, and linking it to the present is a part of the human struggle. 'Talmud' puts new images to familiar Old Testament stories. To me they communicated a lot of the pain experienced. As Dr. Finney pointed out in chapel last week, what is, what was, and what is to come is a part of God's beautiful character. We don't live in one history, but several."

Similarly, student Spencer Adams also connected with the work: "I enjoyed seeing some of the Bible's most common passages take on a new light through Chagall's and Zion's work. It made me reexamine some stories that I had heard hundreds of times."

In her remarks, Sokso pointed out that not only is the work thoughtfully provocative, but it is also beautiful in its craftsmanship. "As a printer who loves her process, I can really see the process in these works, and it is really exciting," she said. The exhibit is a collection of lithograph prints and etchings.

Dr. Benjamin Lipscomb, Professor of Philosophy at

Houghton, appreciated the aesthetic qualities of the prints as well, saying "Chagall is famous for his emotionally expressive use of color, and the coloring of these prints was one of their most striking features: the deep green, bordering on black, of Job crying out in anguish; the scarlet humiliation of Vashti as she is banished from the Ahasuerus's presence." As a self-proclaimed "Chagall junkie," Lipscomb found the display to be especially exciting and significant for Houghton: "It was really extraordinary work. I don't know when we'll see anything quite like it again."

"Talmud" is on loan to Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) for universities, churches and galleries to experience. Both portfolios belong to Edward Knippers, a prominent member of CIVA since the establishment of the organization. Houghton maintains an institutional membership with CIVA.

Knippers, a well-known Christian artist himself, has previously been a guest lecturer and spoken in Wesley Chapel, in addition to showing his own work in the Ortlip Gallery. Knippers

recognizes the importance of the rich ties of faith with the Jewish tradition, stressing that "we prize these works all the more because of their witness not only to the continuity between the Jewish and Christian faiths, but to the primacy of Biblical Truth—God's Word to us—and the foundations the Scriptures lay for the coming of the Messiah."

Included in Sokso's remarks was the introduction of Houghton's new Gallery Director, Meagan Luhrs. Luhrs holds a BA in Art History and Studio Art from Calvin College. She has previously worked with Common Ground Food Co-op in Champaign, Illinois as community outreach coordinator and as a Gallery Assistant at Center Gallery in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her husband Ryan Thompson, Assistant Professor of Art, is the newest member of Houghton's Art Faculty.

"Talmud: The Art of Ben Zion and Marc Chagall" will be open to the public until September 12. ★

# Getting to the Point of *Inception*

## 2 Takes on the Summer's Most Talked-About Film

by Evan Yeong

If you didn't get a chance to watch *Inception*, you're probably more than fed up with people telling you to "go watch it, you need to see it." Having unabashedly transitioned from the tallee to the teller, I now find myself in the position of having to promote this film without the unprofessional usage of hyperbole. That being said, I'm going to break this down as simply as I can by straight-up listing the reasons this is a movie worth your time.

1) Not All All-Star Casts are Awful: Preceded by *Grown Ups*, which filmed a handful of comedians just hanging out and followed up by Sylvester Stallone's *The Expendables*, which starred more celluloid and testosterone than you could shake a can of mace at, *Inception* managed to bring a number of well-known actors together without banking on their names to fill seats. Leonardo DiCaprio at the helm and Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Ellen Page, and Ken Watanabe supporting, *Inception* has more than enough talent to get your attention, but relies instead on a number of other hooks, one of them being that it's-

2) Generally Nice To Look At: Even if all you've seen are trailers and posters *Inception's* aesthetic appeal should be evident to you. A quaint-looking cobblestone street folds in on itself, men in suits grapple with each other as they float through the air, waves lick and eat away at the feet of countless buildings lining the shore, violent explosions are juxtaposed with the ornate decorations of a Japanese palace. James Cameron's *Avatar* featured mind-blowing computer graphics as well, but definitely relied on visuals where it severely lacked in-

3) Sheer Originality: This summer we were barraged by the usual movie adaptation of an old show, a new show, an old movie, and a few comic books. Following up his last film, *The Dark Knight*, Christopher Nolan wrote and directed a unique tale set almost entirely (depending on your own viewpoint) in the dreams of its characters. Totems, marks, jumps,

and the titular inception all come together to create a world we've never seen brought to the silver screen, and it's topped off nicely by-

4) The Devil in the Details: While writing this article I asked a friend what he thought of the movie and was surprised to hear that he really appreciated the physics of the anti-gravity scenes. Not being one to argue with a physics major, I was about to agree before he mentioned that their depiction of Mombasa was extremely authentic, despite having been filmed in Morocco. The Swahili spoken was spoken by native speakers, and even the signs on the stores had been changed from what normally would have been Arabic. The level of commitment to keeping this film believable (dream invasion aside) is impressive, and is easily missed (probably because it's doing its job).

5) It Was One Of The Summer's Best Movies: Terrible, terrible examples aside (*The Last Airbender*, *Vampires Suck*), this summer wasn't too spectacular when it came to the blockbusters. Through word of mouth alone, *Inception* has become the summer's most popular film, and that speaks for itself. Several times I came close to yelling at other passengers on the bus who were discussing the film just a little too loudly, having not yet seen it myself. When everyone everywhere begins talking about a movie (and not just about its explosions) then you've got something special on your hands.

I hope that these five poorly-argued points will sway you who haven't seen *Inception* to go check it out, and for those who have to give it another viewing. If those points weren't enough then I ask you to envision the immaculately well-dressed Joseph Gordon-Levitt, pistol in hand, as he stalks down a hotel corridor. I think that's a sight we can all appreciate - ladies, because it's Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and gentlemen, because it's Joseph Gordon-Levitt (and we will never be that suave). ★

by Erik Beals

The best film of the year. One of the greatest films ever made. These are but some of the words of praise that have been heaped upon Christopher Nolan's most recent film, *Inception*. But is it really worthy of all of these accolades? While it was a fun and enjoyable viewing experience, there were some serious shortcomings that prevent it from being a real masterpiece.

First of all, the plot, while inventive and interesting, doesn't keep the viewer guessing. While individual events in the narrative might be surprising and tense, was anybody really unsure of how it was going to end? Without spoiling anything for those who have not seen it, *Inception* falls into the trap that many blockbuster films do: that everything works out perfectly at the end. There was no tension or uncertainty about what would happen to the characters, beyond a few superficial elements sprinkled here and there. When the credits roll, most viewers would be hard pressed to say, "Wow, I didn't see that coming."

In addition, Nolan presents us with a dream world that feels a lot closer to a slightly twisted reality than an actual dream world. Anyone who has ever had a dream knows that they are bizarre and fractured composites, with no real rules holding together the events. While it would make this film a lot more difficult to pull off, it would have been significantly more impressive if Nolan could have captured the truly surreal and unstable nature of dreams. Here, he creates a far too rigid and logical dream world that most people probably would not realize was a dream if the movie didn't tell us it was.

While the casting was excellent, the only disappointment came from Cillian Murphy. While he is a wonderfully talented actor, it seemed like a waste to have him use an American accent the entire time. With such an international setting and cast in the film, there's no real reason his character

couldn't have been an Irishman. Murphy always seems to excel in roles where he gets to use his native Irish voice, and in this case it probably would have led to an even more convincing performance from him. It's a minor gripe, but one that some fans will see as a bigger issue than most.

The main issue with this film is that it has the makings of an extremely deep and intelligent movie, but the design was pigeonholed into a mainstream summer blockbuster. All of the problems listed above are symptoms of this. If Nolan were willing to be a little less commercial, he could have created a film that probably would have been a fair deal less successful at the box office, but would be remembered as a much more interesting and engaging film. While he didn't totally fail in that regard, pushing out a little farther than most mainstream films are willing to go, he still played it a little too safe.

All in all, while *Inception* was a fun and engaging film that still makes you think a bit, it wasn't a whole lot more than that. Perhaps with a few years of hindsight, people will have a little more accurate view of it. When Nolan's *Dark Knight* came out a few years ago, people were giving it the same sort of praise that they've been giving *Inception*. Few serious film fans would now call *Dark Knight* the greatest film ever made, and in a couple of years, *Inception* will probably suffer the same fate. Looking at Nolan's films objectively, without all of the buzz, *The Prestige* will probably be the film that movie buffs will remember him for 50 years from now. That is, unless he manages to create an even better film (which he has the potential to do, and hopefully will do). As for now, we'll just have to wait for the DVD of *Inception* to come out and have the popcorn ready. ★

# Debate without Divide: A Plea for Civility and Christian Love

by Bryan Overland

Another year at Houghton. A first year for some, a fifth year for others, and who knows how long some of the faculty have been around. One question has been floating in my mind this summer: What is "it" going to be this year at Houghton? What is going to be that issue intends to bring everyone together, but usually ends up separating? My first three years have been interesting, at times entertaining, and at times painful with the issue that seems to dominate the academic year. What have I experienced so far? There was dancing my first year. Then the college seemed almost obsessed with the "green" movement. Anyone remember Matthew Sleeth? Say the word "diversity" around campus and anyone that has been here for more than a year will immediately think "NCMSLC." What about Soulforce and the whole discussion about homosexuality last semester? I'm sure this publication had more readers last semester than any semester in recent history.

As regrettable as it is, there is only so much we can focus on in such a short amount of time. It seems unfair. What is important enough to take up our time this year? Do we devote ourselves to discussions on renewable energy, or getting clean drinking water to all? Should we spend more time discussing human trafficking, or AIDS? The issue is not in whatever hot-button key word is chosen as the topic for the semester; rather, it is in the way we respond to what comes before us. Will we look at it as an opportunity to divide or to come together? Will we hurriedly prepare our arguments and ready our rebuttals, or will we first listen? Will we get offended and fire off a quickly worded letter to the editor, or will we face disagreements in an attitude of patience, grace, and love?

Another avenue of response presents itself to us in the all too popular apathetic dismissal. While an issue may become the lifeblood of one individual, it becomes a joke to another. The jokesters see people getting all worked up about something that seemingly has no bearing on them; in their eyes it becomes ridiculous and an easy way to bring a grin into casual conversation. Let's be honest. During President Mullen's chapel talks, how many people are counting the number of times she says "community"? With some individuals obsessing and others simply dismissing, an issue can run the whole length of the spectrum. Where is the point of balance at which we can find an issue important without

it consuming our community? Conflict by itself sure does bring us together, but it brings us together only to focus on how we are separate. I am not saying that conflict should be avoided, certainly not. But there is a problem when conflict and controversy consume us. When this happens our community does not grow, it just fractures; people become bitter and sometimes even form grudges. So with whatever this year brings us, let's work through it together, not taking it so seriously as to damage our community, but not taking it so lightly as to reduce an important issue to a joke. Let's be intentional in the ways we dialogue, not just talking for the sake of talk, but with a vision to something beyond ourselves.

*Bryan is a senior English and Philosophy major*

**What is going to be that issue that intends to bring everyone together, but usually ends up separating?**

## Your words could be here.

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From the Editor's Desk...

# Dropping the Judgment Call on Bobby McFornicator

by Monica Sandreczki

The other day I was talking to a friend from home who had grown up in a Protestant church, but has been attending a Catholic church since starting college. This was quite the ecclesiastical shift, and she told me how some members of her extended family were less than pleased with her new theological experimentations. She recounted an interchange between her and a family member:

"Lorraine, I wanted to talk to you about your going to that Catholic church. How do your parents feel about this? I can't imagine that they're that thrilled about this," said the family member.

"Actually, Aunt Bonnie, Mom and Dad believe that Catholics are Christians, so they don't really mind. They know I'm still one too," said Lorraine.

"You're just, living in spiritual darkness at that church," said Aunt Bonnie.

"What do you care? You're a Calvinist! Whatever happened to predestination?" said Lorraine.

"Well, I don't know that you've ever really been a Christian anyway."

Like you, perhaps, I initially laughed a bit at the interchange, but once the rudeness factor sank in, my jaw hit the floor. Who was Aunt Bonnie to forthrightly nail her niece,

a questioning, anthropomorphic college student, as not being a Christian? Where did she come off doing that?

Unfortunately, these faith judgment calls aren't anything new. We've all been victim of them, and, let's face it, we've been pointing our fingers too. But, how dare we? We have no business casting doubt on the spiritual lives of other people because we have no concept of what is going on in their hearts. We can barely articulate the state of our own relationships with God, let alone audaciously critique someone else's.

Even staying within that delicate Christian world, Houghton is a prime place for this sort of finger pointing and condemnation by nature as a hot bed of students from all different faith backgrounds. Upon coming to Houghton, we are introduced to denominations that we had previously only heard about in passing, ones that we didn't know existed, and even ones that we might not have originally considered to be Christian. We are finally plucked from our cozy Christian homes that we've grown up in and forced to

interact with people who have habits (say swearing or smoking) that we would never have considered to be Christian, though they in fact are and, in my experience, often live and understand a better concept of a raw Christian life than I ever could.

Plus, given our current stage of late adolescence, we are constantly analyzing and extrapolating and ripping apart our long-held beliefs in an effort to somehow mold them back together to form a perfect worldview. With each new philosophy and theology class, we learn new viewpoints

of the world and are plunged into questioning old ones. And in that process of sifting and filtering, doubts and distress will surface and can start to eat away at us, and we all deal with that questioning state in different ways, even partaking in activities that could very well be sinful.

Now, I've heard plenty of times how "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks and actions flow," which, to an extent, is very true. Actions often are reflecting that confusion within people. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that

sin doesn't exist or that it's entirely relative. But just because we are told to confess our sins to one another, it does not give us license to confess each other's sins, and it especially does not give us the right to raise a pointed finger and sneer as we say, "You know Bobby McFornicator? He's not a really a Christian. He's been caught in some pretty risqué activities." (Or, on the other end of the spectrum, "Look at Nancy von Homeschooler and her tacky anti-feminist provincial ways. How can Jesus even tolerate such close-minded people?")

Instead of being so anxious to point out what a Christian does not look like, perhaps we should step out of ourselves and look in for a change, critiquing our own bad qualities and habits, and treating our brothers and sisters with not just Christian love, but also respect.

*Monica Sandreczki is a junior French and Intercultural Studies Major*

**We've all been the victim and, let's face it, we've been pointing our fingers too.**

**Note From the Editor:**

The Houghton Star did not receive any Letters to the Editor this week.



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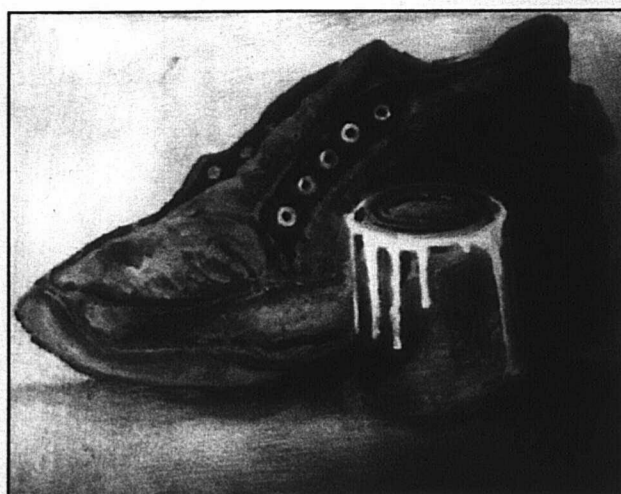
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Untitled, oil (left)

Untitled, oil

# artist WEEK

*A note from the Artist:* "I must refuse to talk about my artwork. It seems to me that whenever one defines, describes, or expounds upon the subject or style of their works; somehow, the beauty of natural flow and phenomena is horribly polluted by the conscious effort. I create because it is in me to do so. The question of whether it is in the mind, soul, emotion, or reasonable part of me is of no consequence."



Untitled, oil



Untitled, oil

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

THIS SUDOKU IS  
**EASY**

Bring your finished sudoku puzzles to the STAR office clearly marked with FULL NAME.

## SUDOKU CHALLENGE

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

THIS SUDOKU IS  
**HARD**

Prize:  
Leroy Townes  
and the  
Lonestars'  
album!