

AColyte

Easter 2024

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



WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY.

--Mao Zedong

(He was not a particularly exemplary guy, but that's a great quote)

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

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

175 Years in the Middle of All of It

Easter 2024

*I have been to the movies,
I've seen how it ends
And the joke's on them.
--Brandi Carlile*

*God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.
--Genesis 1:27 (Common English Version)*

This Sunday (March 31) is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal Equinox (which was March 19).

That means that a lot of Christians like me are going to be geeking out and telling a pretty far-fetched story about a kind and smart and loving and charismatic guy who lived on the other side of the world a long time ago.

We've spent this whole week talking about how he got

- Celebrated and welcomed as he came in to the big city of Jerusalem;
- Sold out by one of his closest friends;
- Arrested for being a threat to people who were perfectly happy with the way things were;
- Convicted; and
- Executed.

[I know that sounds like one of those "He Gets Us" commercials,
but I can't help it.
That actually is how the story goes.]

Then this week at Sunday night Worship, we'll read this part of the story:

*After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb.*

Jesus had died, been taken down off the cross, and placed in a tomb.

The two Marys were there outside the tomb.

*Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet
as God's angel came down from heaven,
came right up to where they were standing.*

He rolled back the stone and then sat on it.

Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white.

*The guards at the tomb were scared to death.
They were so frightened, they couldn't move.*

Ya think?

Earthquake.

Angel down from heaven.

Rolling back the big stone at the mouth of the tomb.

Slinging lightning bolts.

Heck yes they were scared.

*The angel spoke to the women:
"There is nothing to fear here.*

*I know you're looking for Jesus,
the One they nailed to the cross.*

*He is not here.
He was raised, just as he said.
Come and look at the place where he was placed.*

Many of you know the story.

Jesus was dead and buried.

And then he wasn't any more.

*"Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples,
'He is risen from the dead.
He is going on ahead of you to Galilee.
You will see him there.'
That's the message."*

That's the version of the first part of Matthew, Chapter 28 in the *Message* translation of the Bible.

We will read it Sunday night.

More on that below.

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One of the many things we've done to celebrate the 175th year of Austin College this year is to highlight Austin College graduates who are both women and ministers.

On February 13 we hosted a panel of graduates from the last 25 years who have made careers in ministry or Religious Studies.

That's who's in this photo.



From left to right, they are:

Natalie Readnour (20)

Natalie is currently a PhD student in SMU's Graduate Program Religious Studies, focusing on theology and culture. Natalie graduated from Austin College in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and Sociology and from Boston University School of Theology with a Master of Divinity in 2023.

Dr. Stacy Smith ('02)

Stacy is currently bridge pastor at First Presbyterian Church in New Haven, CT. She previously served as a temporary pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Auburn, NY, and as the interim pastor at Buntyn Presbyterian Church in Memphis, TN. Stacy graduated from Austin College in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Communication Arts. She received her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 2007 and studied Higher Education Leadership and Policy at [Vanderbilt University](#), where she received her Doctor of Education degree in 2016. She is the author of *Bless Her Heart: Life as a Young Clergy Woman* (Chalice Press, 2011).

Dr. Tanya Eustace Campen ('01)

Tanya is the Director of Intergenerational Discipleship at [Río Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church](#) in San Antonio, TX. She graduated with honors with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music and Religion from Austin College in 2001. While at Austin College, Tanya was a member of Alpha Delta Chi. Her Master of Divinity is from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Tanya received her Doctor of Philosophy in Christian education and congregational studies from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her research focus is children's spirituality. She is the author of *Holy Work with Children: Making Meaning Together* (Horizons in Religious Education, 2021) and *Faith Formation in the New Generation* (Lifelong Faith Books, 2018) and a co-author of *Wonderfully Made: Faith and Sexuality Education for Ages 10-12* (Abingdon Press, 2017). More about Dr. Campen can be found at her website: <https://riotexas.org/tcampen>.

Some tall, stiff Chaplain who has a lot of cool friends.

Dr. Beth Gill, Austin College Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Rev. Anne Scalfaro ('03)

Anne is the Senior Pastor at [Calvary Baptist Church of Denver](#). Anne graduated from Austin College in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Philosophy and Harvard Divinity School with a Master of Divinity and was ordained to the ministry in 2008 at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, TX, following a two-year pastoral residency program. In 2023, she was named the Baptist Women in Ministry "Church of Excellence" Award winner.

Libby Janes ('15)

Libby is currently working on a Master of Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Libby graduated from Austin College in 2015 with majors in Religious Studies and History, and minors in Anthropology and Nonprofit Organizations and Public Service. She received her Master of Social Work degree in 2018 from Texas Tech University.

Rev. Kristin Austew ('07)

Kristin is Chaplain at [Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City](#). Kristin graduated from Austin College with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Philosophy in 2007 and from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity in 2011.

That was a very cool panel discussion and dinner.

#ProudChaplain

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Then, later that same week, on Friday February 16, the Austin College Board of Trustees gave a **James I. McCord Award for Outstanding Service to the Presbyterian Church**.



[That's Mary Elva in the center.
On the left is Rev. Cheri Harper (AC '94)]

Here's what President O'Day said at that dinner:

In November 1998, the Austin College Board of Trustees created the James I. McCord Award for Outstanding Service to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

This award highlights Austin College's strong ties to the Presbyterian Church by honoring Austin College alumni who have made significant and far-reaching contributions to the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

***James I. McCord** graduated from Austin College in 1938. His long and distinguished career in the Presbyterian Church included service as Dean of the Faculty at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (1945-1959) and President of Princeton Theological Seminary (1959-1983). Dr. McCord also served as President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1977-82). In 1983, he received the Templeton Foundation Award for Progress in Religion. The Templeton Foundation Award cited Dr. McCord as "one of the great figures in the world of religious education today."*

The James I. McCord Award is intended to honor Austin College alumni who have demonstrated the depth of service to the church that Dr. McCord exhibited throughout his life.

*Tonight we proudly recognize the tenth recipient of the James I. McCord Award, 1966 graduate **Mary Elva Deloteus Smith**.*

As a lifelong student and educator, Mary Elva has been

- *a public school teacher,*
- *Director of Christian Education in several Presbyterian congregations,*
- *Hunger Coordinator for the Synod of the Rocky Mountains,*
- *Presbytery staff in San Diego (2 positions and 4 titles in 13 years), and*
- ***Director of Women's Ministries in the National offices for the PCUSA***
 - *A position which enabled her to serve as an example and mentor to many AC students and alumni.*

She currently serves as Director of Spiritual Ministries at Faith Presbyterian Church in San Diego, CA.

Throughout her career, Mary Elva Deloteus Smith has served the Presbyterian Church as an educator, a lifelong learner, and a skilled nurturer of others on their journeys.

And it is my pleasure to present her with the Austin College James I. McCord Award for Outstanding Service to the Presbyterian Church.

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Then, on Thursday March 7, 2009 Austin College Alum **Dr. Jaisy Joseph** delivered the 2024 Allen-Head Lecture.

The Allen-Head Lecture Series was established by an endowment gift in 1985 in memory and celebration of E.T. Allen Sr. and Mary Bell Anderson Allen; Mr. and Mrs. E.T. Allen Jr.; and Mr. and Mrs. R.B. Head Jr. of Whitesboro, Texas. The lectures feature nationally prominent speakers in the areas of religion, philosophy, psychology, history, and literature.

Dr. Joseph, who is Assistant Professor of Theology at Villanova University, gave a fascinating talk entitled *The Tensions of Unity and Difference in Global Christianity: How Collective Healing Can Emerge from Our Entangled Histories*.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about "entangled histories" since I heard Jaisy's lecture.

It was a fascinating and insightful talk.

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We also received this photo this week to use in our promotion of the Austin College Baccalaureate Service in Wynne Chapel at 7:00pm on Friday May 17.



That's **Rev. Keatan King**. She's a 2009 Graduate of Austin College, Associate Pastor at St. Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston, and an outstanding preacher who is not prone to excessive reverence. Y'all will love her.

[No pressure, Keatan.]

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Here's why I thought about all of those women this week.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, the first people who found out that Jesus wasn't dead any more were women. And there are similar stories in Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.

To quote theologian Jurgen Moltmann:

*Without women preachers,
we would have no knowledge of the resurrection.*

It was women who first learned and then told about Easter.

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To be sure, 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 says

*³⁴Women should be silent in the churches.
For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate,
as the law also says.*

*³⁵If there is something they want to learn,
let them ask their husbands at home.
For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

There are serious, Spirit-filled, earnest Christians who believe these two verses (and possibly a few others) mean that women should not be in positions of authority and leadership in the Church.

I'm not one of those Christians.

Neither are the outstanding alumni whom we have welcomed and honored in this 175th year of Austin College.

Neither are the dozens and scores and hundreds of women who have graduated from Austin College and had long, important, and faithful careers in ministry.

There are several stories throughout the Bible in which women play significant leadership roles in the Community of Faith.

See for example, the stories of

- Miriam (throughout the Book of Exodus)
- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22-28);
- Deborah (Judges 4-5);
- Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38, 46-55);
- Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-20);
- Phoebe (Acts 16:1-2);
- Lydia (Acts 16:13-15).

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Every year at Easter Worship, we sing a hymn called "Christ is Risen, Shout Hosanna!"

That hymn includes this verse:

*Christ is risen! Earth and heaven
Never more shall be the same
Break the bread of new creation
Where the world is still in pain
Tell its grim, demonic chorus,
"Christ is risen! Get you gone!"
God, the First and Last, is with us
Sing Hosanna, everyone!*

When I sing about the "grim, demonic chorus" I think about those voices in our world that say, or suggest, "There are things you cannot or should not do because of your gender, gender identity, or some other biological feature of your life."

When I think about Easter, I think about ways that those voices are defeated and silenced.

To circle back to the Brandi Carlile quote at the beginning of this piece:

*I've seen how it ends
And the joke's on them.*

Somehow lots of us continue to be heartened and strengthened by the notion that death did not extinguish that pretty far-fetched story about a kind and smart and loving and charismatic guy who lived on the other side of the world a long time ago.

Unfortunately, people (including people in #ROONation) must still contend against voices that seek to diminish and devalue them.

Easter reminds and requires those of us who find meaning in this story to tell that grim, demonic chorus to **“Shut the ^\$&@ up!”**

That’ll preach.

Until Next Time, I Remain,

Just Another Cowboy Preacher,
Remembering the Easter Truth
That the Last Good Thing Hasn’t Happened Yet,

JOHN WILLIAMS
Chaplain

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CONGRATULATIONS
To the 2024-25
Sallie Majors
Religious Life Interns
Lana Abou-Khamis

Lee Campbell
Elizabeth Jacobs
Jo Pettijohn
Aven Roberts
Lauren Stark
Aiden Varnell
Cailey Varnell