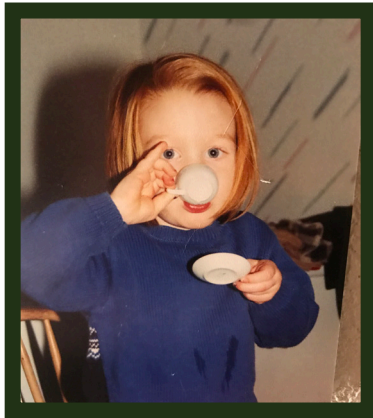


# CULTIVATE

DECEMBER 2020





"There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature."

-Jane Austen

It's Christmas time, and the seasons just keep spinning. Is it just me, or does it feel like March was equally two months ago, and four years ago? As we look forward to the Christmas celebrations and the new year, we have an opportunity to look back as well. Much has changed since last Christmas, but much has stayed the same. The same family gathers around the decorated tree, though they may be connected via zoom, rather than in person. The same Christmas Eve services will be attended, and the same God who was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the ruler of the universe, and continues His faithfulness to all who follow Him. This past year we have had more opportunities to extend grace, practice discipline, and intentionally participate in the body of Christ.

As we look forward to the coming year, we look forward with hope, knowing that God fulfills His promises. We look forward with love, extending the same love Christ showed us first. We look forward to peace, a peace that surpasses understanding in a whirlwind of change. We look forward to the joy of the coming Kingdom, where all the earth will shout God's praise.

Your friend,

L. Warren

Editor

# COMMUNITY



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# RECALLING THE TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS

Shelby Mogge

It's the time of the year where we all cling to traditions while celebrating Christmas. The traditions of each of our families have created the unique and specific way we remember the season. I interviewed various people asking about their unique family traditions and received interesting responses.

One of the first questions I asked was, "What traditions does your family celebrate during the Christmas season?"

Almost every tradition recalled has been celebrated since the person was a young child and their parents continue to celebrate the same kind of traditions since their childhood.

When you think about Christmas your own traditions tend to surface. You think of the early mornings spent begging your parents to wake up and see what Santa brought, or the cinnamon roll breakfast waiting for you. Each family has such a unique way of celebrating Christmas. Every aspect of the Christmas season seems to have its own list of traditions for each family, from the kind of Christmas tree, decorating it, what kind of presents and in what order, and what kind of food for the day.

The way we celebrate Christmas has evolved through the years with some traditions that have been kept alive. The biggest, and most consistent tradition that has been kept alive through the generations is a Christmas tree. In purchasing a

Christmas tree it is either store bought or through a Christmas tree farm to cut down the perfect tree. It is a whole family event to chop down a tree and decorate it with ornaments and lights.

Some families make it a whole event to hunt down the perfect tree. Depending on the area you live in there are different tree options to choose from, and it can take hours to find the perfect one. Since this Thanksgiving season was quite different from the norm, one student at GNU's family was a bit smaller for the annual tree hunt. They were able to FaceTime with the other siblings. Normally the mom gets to pick the tree out, or at least have the final say, but this year, they each got an ornament attached to a rubber band in order to cast their vote on the perfect tree at a local tree farm. In the search for the perfect tree, tree farms have different ways of securing your Christmas tree. It is normally between a you pick-you cut and you pick- we cut. The way Christmas tree farms normally operate is for families to find the perfect tree that will make their living rooms come alive with the smell of fresh pine, and the warm glow of Christmas lights. Once a family has spotted the perfect, fragrant tree they secure the tree by cutting it down with a saw. Some tree farms have the option of cutting it down for you but families normally have a tradition of cutting their tree themselves.

Christmas trees are a huge part of Christmas traditions because the tree is the culmination of

Christmas spirit. Once the tree is home and brought inside, the real fun begins. In setting up my family's Christmas tree we normally have Christmas oldies playing in the background such as Frank Sinatra's "Have yourself a merry little Christmas", and Brenda Lee's "Rockin around the Christmas tree." My mom goes to the basement to fetch old boxes filled with old ornaments to decorate the Christmas tree.

After finding the perfect Christmas tree (alive or fake) there are traditions with decorating the Christmas tree. Often, families have ornaments that hold sentimental value. When you unbox the ornaments there is a sense of nostalgia, laughter, and with kindergarten crafts, a sense of awe at your own talent as a 6 year old. There are ornaments throughout the years that are special and tell a story of a place visited or a craft created in elementary school, or of a loved one who is no longer with us.

Ornaments that come to mind are Disney ceramic ornaments my mom has collected over the years that are always so exciting to unbox. Another ornament is a wooden cowboy that was always so fun to play with as a younger kid. Another person mentioned an ornament that was made out of popsicle sticks to form a Christmas tree.

One tradition from a family friend involves hiding a pickle shaped ornament and hiding it somewhere on the tree Christmas Eve. The first person to find the pickle ornament on Christmas morning gets to open the very first gift. This odd tradition stems from Canadian and German descent. No one can pin the origin of the strange pickle tradition but there are (include various options of origin stories?)

Decorating the tree for Christmas is a huge part of traditions. Some families wrap the tree with popcorn or cranberry strings. In the interview people also mentioned stringing dried oranges around the tree as well. Lights are normally used as the final touch in decorating the tree. Once the final touches are made families gather around the roaring fire with hot chocolate in

hand and plug in the lights that bring a sense of wonder to Christmas.

Presents are a huge part of Christmas. Traditions from an individual surrounding the idea of gift giving is that their family makes their gifts homemade as well as their ornaments. Each year these gifts are given with intentionality and love, knowing that it took more time and energy to create something, than to buy it.

Even the order of events that happen on Christmas are specific to families' traditions. Some families start with breakfast, stocking, and regular presents. Other families open presents, stockings, and end with breakfast. Others even spread these events over the couple of days surrounding Christmas when there are mixed families. One family attends Christmas Eve service, then a Christmas Eve party, then home to unwrap the stockings. Then on Christmas morning, after everyone has had a sufficient amount of coffee and breakfast snacks, do they endeavour the gift exchange, topped off with a lunch that could feed a nation.

Families normally hang stockings above the fireplace for presents. When you can open stockings is different among families. My own family tends to open our stockings at the very end of Christmas morning. An individual shared during our interview that his mom used to put specific fruit in his and his siblings stocking. Each sibling had a specific fruit that was given to them every year on Christmas, between a pomegranate, orange, and apple.

Christmas breakfast is a big deal in many families' traditions. A common breakfast item is pancakes and/or waffles. Some people have specific breakfast foods such as Swedish pancakes, bacon, goetta, which is a pin-head oat sausage, sausage-egg casserole.

Christmas time is a special time to celebrate and be festive. We are all festive in our own, unique ways that form and sustain the value and significance of Christmas for individual families.



# HISTORIC TO HIGH-TECH, THE STORY OF EARBUDS

C.J. Elliot

**M**uch like a wall adorned with paint, headphones can be found in and on just about every public space. We see them everywhere; our culture has been inundated with devices that bestow personal soundscapes. Who doesn't own more than one pair of headphones? DJ Khaled, a Grammy winning pop artist, once remarked "It's safe to say that headphones are a good business." These days headphones are more than just a way to listen to music, they have become a fashion statement among younger generations. But music wasn't always a wearable accessory. There was a time where the only fingertips that had access to it, were ones that preformed it. There was a renaissance or two on the journey to the wireless earbuds.

Earbuds are not new; they have been around since the invention of the phonograph. Thomas Edison is famously known for inventing the first device capable of capturing sound and replaying that sound at will. His device was trademarked in 1887. The early devices were not portable, nor did they feature the distinct apparatus for head bound listening. Gramophones and early record players always boasted large brass sound cones for which the music so bountifully poured out. During the first world war, radio headsets became a battlefield necessity.

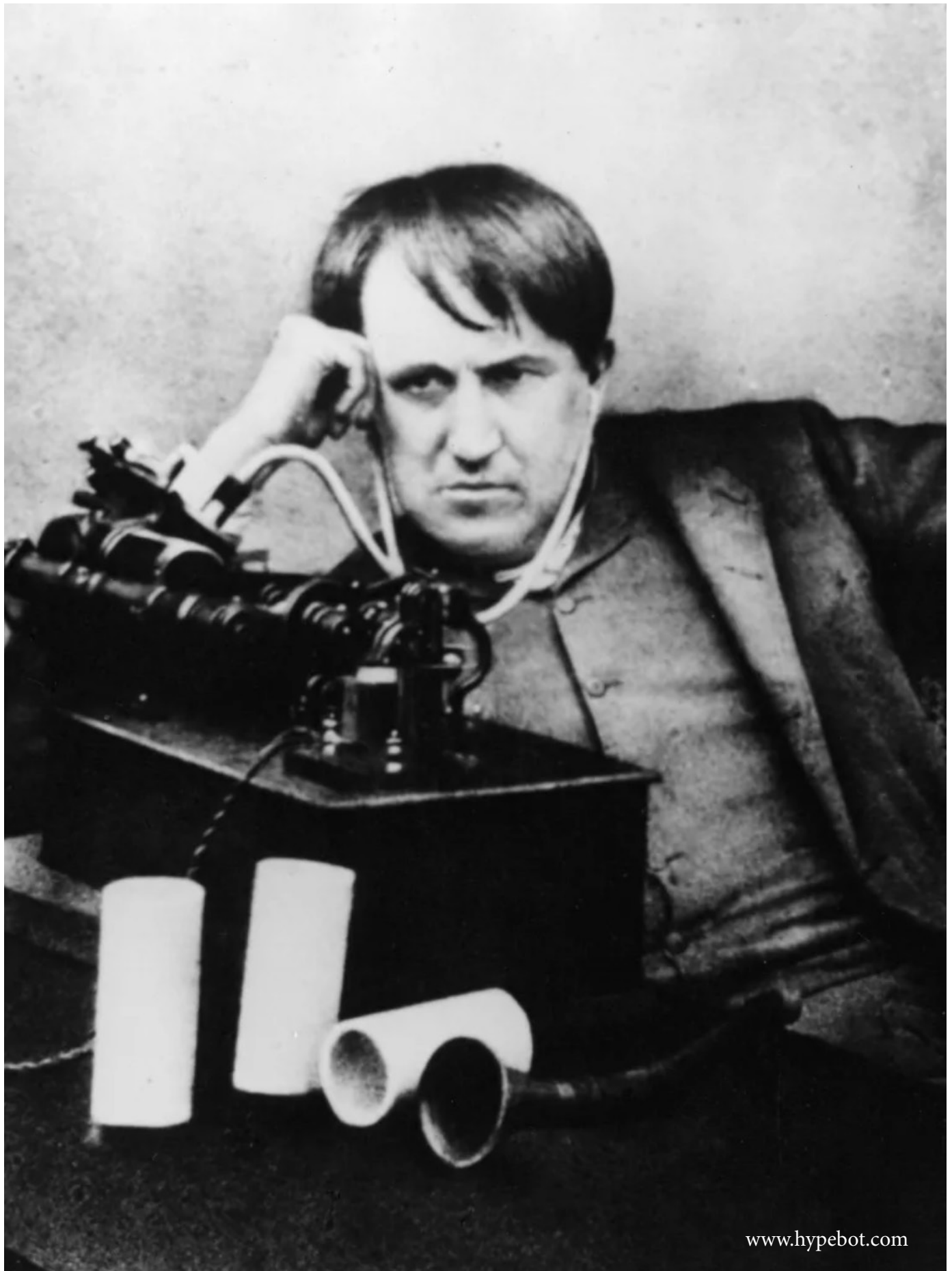
From 1910 to 1958, headphones were technical tools employed by the US Navy to assist in radar operation. The US Airforce also adopted the technology for pilots, who could communicate handsfree when wearing headsets. In the early

60's, the concept of the headphone shifted into the music industry with the help of jazz musician and audiophile, John C Koss. A simple jump of 20 years and the world was astonished at Sony's Walkman announcement. The entrepreneurial market of the 80's allowed for the competition to push the personal audio market to new heights. Some would say the MP4 is the high water mark of this race, but others would say we have yet to see this technology's true limit.

In the same fashion that radio and recording equipment developed simultaneously, there are also new developments occurring with the jump to wireless-ness. Bose developed active noise cancelling headphones in 1999. By eliminating noises from outside the headset, users experienced complete isolation from the outside world. The idea of a personal soundscape was slowly taking hold on the wearable market.

One cultural craze that is fueling the development of earbud today is the active lifestyle trend. Did it start with NFL players wearing the newest Beats by Dre headphone? They are contractually obligated to wear them when arriving at a new venue, due to sponsorship deals. This marketing strategy recently proved effective, 2019's World Cup had players from both teams almost exclusively chose to don Apple's brands of earbuds, including Beats by Dre. Apple was not sponsoring the event, but the photos of the players brought the tech giant plenty of attention from consumers. Subtle product placements like this seem to fit right in with sports and athletics in general. Nothing gets a





[www.hypebot.com](http://www.hypebot.com)

heart rate up after all, like pop music and a shiny status symbol that fits in your ear. Another side effect of this trend is the development of smart wearables focused on tracking their owners' health information. Valencell, a biotech company, has specialized in developing sensors that are small enough to be implanted in these new wearables, adding data such as heart rate, blood glucose levels, and others to the smartwatches and now wireless earbuds.

Technology is starting to feel like a river; each branch develops from unique sources and all flow down into one stream. Samsung, a major tech producer out of Korea, announced alongside competitors, that their new flagship smartphones would ship with wireless earbuds included in the box. Part of the reason for this is to allow users who adopt the newer devices to also maintain the ability to listen to music on the new phones. That sounds odd to think of a new phone not being able to play music like its predecessors. Ever since the Walkman, the standard way of connecting earphones to a device has been the 3.5ml audio jack. Just about everything with a speaker has a jack like this. That will likely change in the coming years as many manufacturers choose wireless over the old cord that once was a lifeline for the technology.



It is difficult to say where the future of personal audio is bound to take us. We simply don't know where the next advancement will come from or how long it will take the new technology to float down into the everyday consumer's hands. Amazing soundscapes once limited to theaters and productions are now available at our fingertips and in our ears. We simply don't need to crowd around the family radio anymore. But as we gather together this holiday season, remember that the true gift of an earbud isn't the isolation but the music that will be enjoyed on the other end of the six foot gap.

www.bing.com



Photo by Grzegorz from Pexels

3 B

3 C



4 B

4 C



5 B

5 C



6 B

6 C



7 B

7 C



# LIBRARY LINE-UP

## **CURRENT**

### **PROJECTS:**

1,020 boxes of  
books sitll need  
to be processed

## **STATS:**

27,766 RESOURCES

805 SHELVES

115 STACKS

345 LINEAR FEET OF SHELVES

## **ONGOING PROJECTS:**

1. Labor to move boxes before the end of the semester (see Carol Anderson if you can help)
2. Putting barcodes on all the books
3. Refining systems, including on-going shelf-reading (checking each book on the shelf)
4. Managing E-Bay sale of books

### **HOURS:**

Always open when the building is open;  
self service

### **EMAIL:**

library@greatnorthernu.org

## **WHO:**

Dr. Jennifer Mills: Library Coordinator

Carol Anderson: Library Consultant

Beth Hills: Library Director

Bob Roundy (source of chocolate chip cookies) : Library  
Technician

Kim Coltrin: Library Technician

# MOVING TOWARD ACCREDITATION

Dr. Kay Tronsen

**A**ccreditation can be one of those vague words tossed around in higher education; we know some have it and some don't; it's valued and important. But what does it mean? Accreditation is a voluntary peer-review process in which a university is reviewed by other peers in education in accreditation agencies created to determine the quality of a university's education. That sounds very academic, and, of course, it is. Maybe an analogy will help.

Imagine moving into a new neighborhood that is rather formal and well-established with fancy curved driveways and manicured lawns. Everyone knows their place in this world. You, the newcomer, try to make friends, but everyone is reserved and careful, not sure about your place in the neighborhood. You are in Applicant Status: how will you fit in with the rest of the neighborhood? Are you going to bring down property values around you or will you add to the prestige and value of the neighborhood?

After you've been in the neighborhood

awhile, people realize you intend to stay. You move into Candidate Status, an upgrade on your reputation. You've been around long enough that people begin to trust that you aren't going to take apart any motorcycles on your front lawn, or roar around the streets endangering innocent lives. They invite you into their homes, relationships begin to build and strengthen, and your attendance at birthday parties and events is welcome. You're not quite on the Homeowners Board or the Safety Committee, but you are an accepted part of the neighborhood.

The analogy isn't perfect since it misses all the process rigor, but I hope it provides an image for understanding accreditation. Great Northern University received Candidate Status recently, a milestone that permits us to apply for VA benefits and federal aid for students, separate lengthy processes in themselves but at least they are in the works. Full accreditation is the ultimate goal, of course, but, as with many such things, like fitting into a new neighborhood, persistence, faithfulness, and time will pay off.



# THE MYSTERIOUS DR. MILLS

Dr. Kay Tronsen

**D**r. Jennifer Mills, Provost at Great Northern University, sat kitty-corner from me in the Student Lounge, the first snow of winter slowly falling outside the distant window. I had an odd mixture of questions: some serious, some “mysterious-Dr. Mills” questions, and some not-very-serious questions. My intent was to present the human side of Dr. Mills as well as to answer some lingering mysteries that I had heard snippets of during my nine-year acquaintance with her, mostly from students.

To prepare, before Dr. Mills and I met for the interview, I snagged some current GNU students to ask them what they had heard about Dr. Mills or what question they would like her to answer. It turned out to be a surprising array. I warned Dr. Mills that I had asked for students’ input and had received some interesting answers. She laughed and said, “It’s been going on for like twelve years, where people I’ve never even talked to have the strangest stories . . . so [like] telephone-over-the-decades.”

So, what’s the truth and what’s the distortion caused by the Telephone-Game effect? Read on; you might be surprised.

## THE INTERVIEW

KT: Can you confirm or deny . . . are you part of any secret organizations, like the CIA, maybe?

JM: No, not the CIA. I do have some work I do with the government that I have to sign a non-disclosure for, but it’s not any organized group; it’s like a think tank.

KT: Does it have a name?

JM: No, I don’t think so. Not really.

KT: So . . . how do you know what you’re supposed to think about?

JM: We’re not told anything in advance of showing up. And then we are given a precis and start from there.

KT: So you just have a prearranged schedule for the meetings, and then they tell you what you’re thinking about?

JM: No . . . it’s ad hoc. They call and they ask if we can go to some location, often in Princeton or Washington DC on a certain date. They take away our phones and our laptops, and we aren’t allowed to communicate about what we do there. But in general, it’s just to think through strategies in response to pretty random events. The only thing they are really looking for is a random sample of people and how they would respond.

KT: Somebody told me that they heard . . . this has been so much fun . . . [laughing] that you are like three credits away from having fifteen majors.

JM: [laughing] No . . . let’s see . . . I have

five majors and four minors, and they are completely done, and I have no credits outstanding.

I asked her if she could confirm or deny that she was the head of a C.S. Lewis Research Group.

JM: Nope, I'm not. I have presented at it and worked with the head of the C.S. Lewis group in Texas. When I was at Baylor, they were often on our campus, and I actually helped plan the C.S. Lewis conference for two years, but I am definitely not the head of it.

KT: Another student from a couple of years ago said he wanted to know why you disappeared out of class for a couple of weeks. Where did you go? He heard you had gone to Italy.

JM: [Laughing.] I don't think I've ever missed class . . . ever. I did go to Italy, [laughing] and I did teach there, but I don't think I missed any classes to do it.

KT: Is it true that you are on an airline watch list? This came from a student.

JM: I was. In fact, you experienced it. Remember, when we went to California and I got pulled?

KT: Yes, I know! I remember that!

JM: I don't believe I am any longer. I don't seem to be getting any special treatment. I had to meet with the FBI on three separate occasions, and they had to interview a lot of people in my life. I was told I was removed from the list, but still they were searching my suitcases and things. But eventually, they seemed to have removed my name. I seem to travel now like anyone else.

KT: That's great—good news. Can you tell us anything about why you were on that list? What can you say in public about that?

## Where has Dr. Mills been?

Canada, Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Thailand, Singapore, New Zealand, Israel, Italy, Fiji, Peru, Bahamas, Germany, Indonesia, Jamaica, Vietnam and Cambodia and Myanmar and Laos







JM: Well, when I was in Nicaragua, the communist party was running in the first free election and the general who was running for president is the one who signed the death warrants of thousands and thousands of Americans and American sympathizers back in the war in the 1960's and 70's in Nicaragua. He was a person of definite concern for the American government. And I accidentally visited him [laughing] and got on the list.

KT: How did you accidentally visit him?

JM: Have I not told you the story? It's hard to do a head count, but they estimate about 30,000 people live in the largest garbage dump near

Managua. And so I would translate for medical teams, and during times of elections, when things are really tense, they pulled all non-essential people out of the country, but they asked our particular school to remain in session because it contributed to the stability of the country. So everyone else left, and there were no medical teams coming in, no missionaries, no visitors, so I didn't want the people in the garbage dump to feel abandoned, so I was continuing to go on weekends just to do what little I could because even the little bit of knowledge I had, and the Neosporin tubes I had, were more than what they would ever have so I just continued to go so they wouldn't feel alone. And, someone

**Dr. Tronsen asked the faculty  
for a one-word description of  
Dr. Mills.**

**Dr. Jerry Vreeland:** “Brilliant”

**Carol Anderson:** “Resolute”

**Dr. Floyd Schneider:** “Over-  
worked”

**Dr. Craig Ferderer:** “Genius”

**Dr. Michael Orr:** “Persistent”

**Dr. Elaine Ackerman:**

“Energizerbunny” (KT: No,  
Elaine, that is not one word)

**Dr. Marc Canner:** “Incredibly  
talented and courageous” (KT:  
Also, not one word)

**Dr. Michael Kibbe:**  
“Mysterious”

**Dr. David Beine:** “Areallyamazi  
ngfantasticandtalentedcolleaguew  
ithareallyamazinglifehistorywhoh  
asanamazingsenseofhumorwhen  
yougettoknowher.” (KT: Ever the  
rebel)

(I don't want to name names) volunteered to come with me for the first time, and said she would drive the van. I explained to her the conditions being what they are, she didn't want to appear to be a person who could be ransomed for money. I hadn't taken a shower the night before; my clothes were the clothes I always wore to the garbage dump, never washed; they were very stinky. She was dressed in evening attire and drove us to the compound where the presidential candidate lived or was staying. And, he'd been interested in hearing an American perspective on his campaign, and she picked me, and I didn't know about it in advance. So, yeah . . . a satellite image of me driving into the compound I'm sure showed me looking very shell shocked. That's how I got on the watch list.

KT: So, how old were you when this happened?

JM: Hmm . . . 19?

KT: Scary!

JM: Yeah, first job [laughing]

KT: Somebody wanted to know the number of books you have. Any idea?

JM: No idea. And the sad part is if it's a book I really like, I give it away. I feel like everyone else should experience it. So the only books on my shelves are not my favorites.

KT: Somebody told me you were banned from some countries, like Costa Rica. Is that true?

JM: Well, no, because I was on the watch list, they actually share that watch list with other counties, so it was harder to get into places like Canada [laughing]. But, yeah, when I was in Nicaragua, it was really hard to get to Costa Rica because there's a lot of

tension and rumors of wars between the countries. So [because] of my visa, I had to leave the country every six weeks – and getting into Costa Rica was really challenging. Not because I was on the watch list there; it was because they didn't like people coming from Nicaragua.

KT: Somebody said, they heard, that you will take any animal that comes to your door. Is this true?

JM: They only say this because it's happened.

KT: How many times has it happened?

JM: Five? I have an "in" with the no-kill shelter, so I don't keep them. I [arrange for] them [to get] vet treatment, and then they go to the no-kill shelter.

KT: Somebody told me you are really good at reading upside down.

JM: [laughing] Yeah. I don't know if I have brain disorder or what, but it is as easy for me to read upside down or in a mirror as to read regularly. I got a lot of experience reading upside down when I was little because I had to hide my books, and I just read them in whatever orientation they were in.

KT: Were you not aware, then, that most people read one direction?

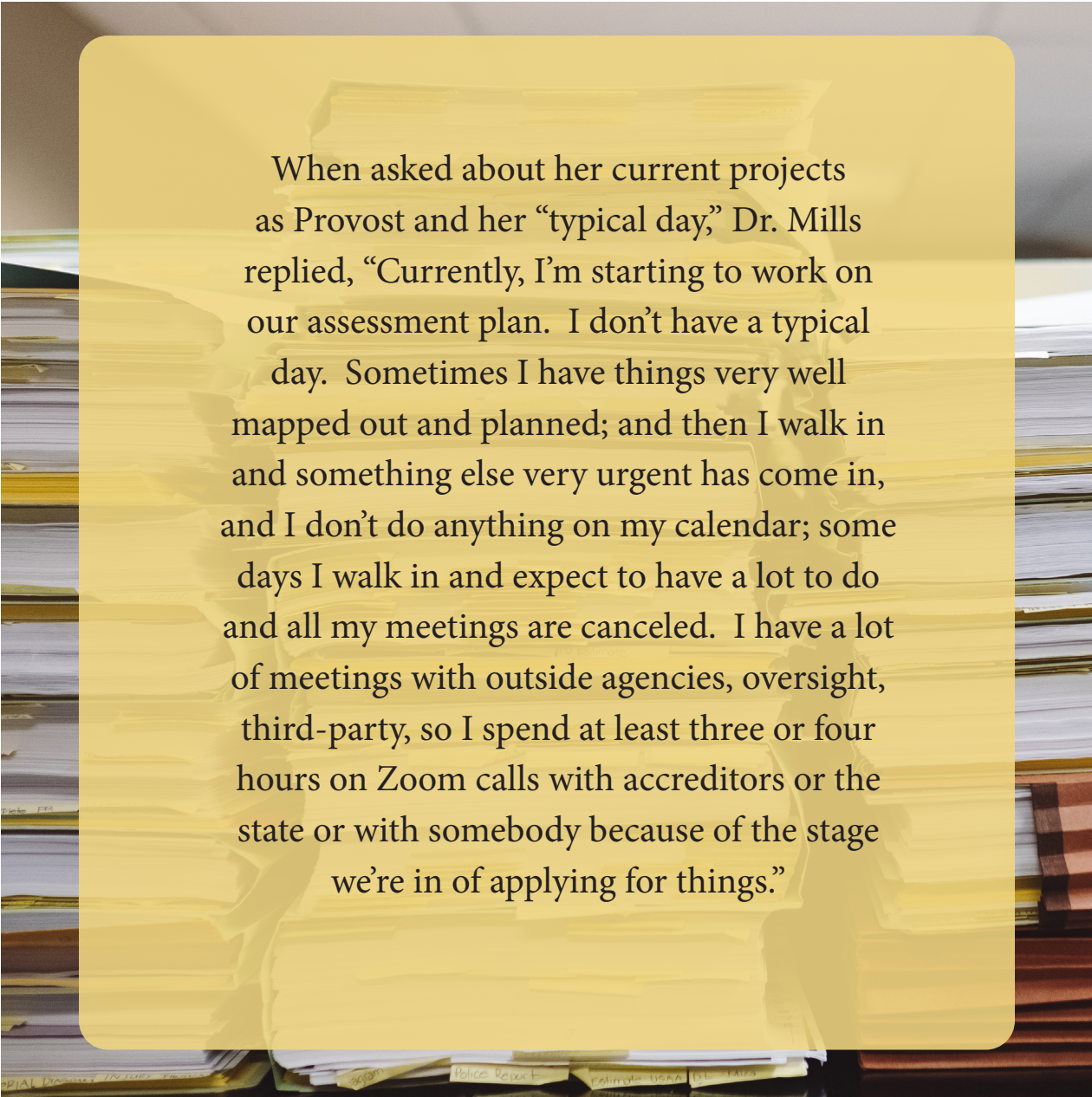
JM: Oh, no, I knew it. But if you're smuggling something in your desk, and you don't want to creak it open and pull it out and switch it around; it's too obvious.

KT: Has that proven to be a handy skill on occasion?

JM: It works now if I'm reading something with a student across from me that we are reading together.

KT: What skill or craft would you like to





When asked about her current projects as Provost and her “typical day,” Dr. Mills replied, “Currently, I’m starting to work on our assessment plan. I don’t have a typical day. Sometimes I have things very well mapped out and planned; and then I walk in and something else very urgent has come in, and I don’t do anything on my calendar; some days I walk in and expect to have a lot to do and all my meetings are canceled. I have a lot of meetings with outside agencies, oversight, third-party, so I spend at least three or four hours on Zoom calls with accreditors or the state or with somebody because of the stage we’re in of applying for things.”

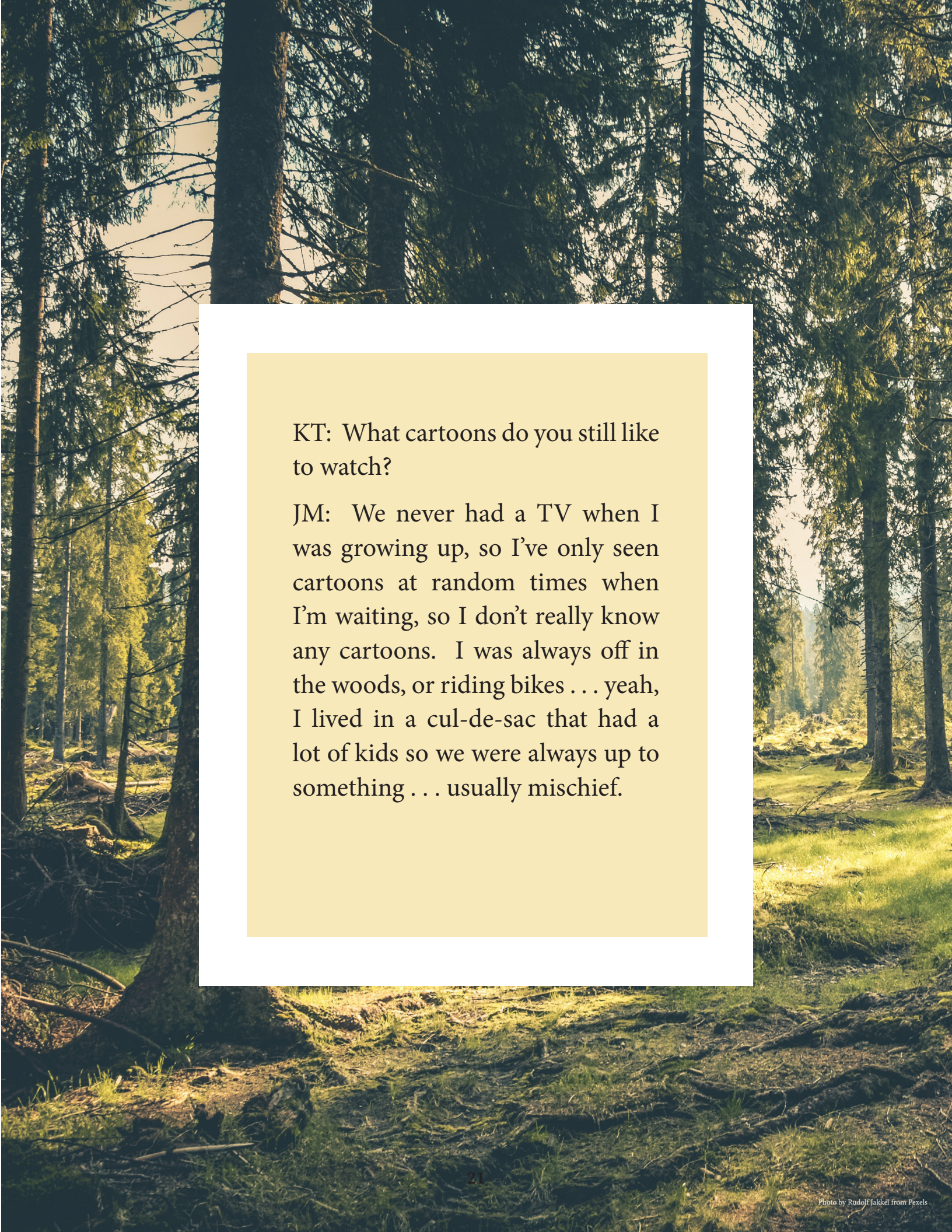
master?

JM: I really like scuba diving; I would like to get better at that. I have done a little bit of hang-gliding and enjoy that. I don’t think I could ever (never say never) but it would have to be a pretty desperate situation for me to parachute out of a plane, but I really like hang gliding.

KT: How many times have you gone hang gliding?

JM: Four? You don’t really feel like you’re up high – you feel like you’re floating.

So, folks, there you have it, mysteries revealed, rumors stifled, and questions answered about our own Dr. Jennifer Mills. We are lucky to have her. She continues to serve Great Northern University with passion and skill, bringing her past experiences and connections to serve us and to serve Christ well.



KT: What cartoons do you still like to watch?

JM: We never had a TV when I was growing up, so I've only seen cartoons at random times when I'm waiting, so I don't really know any cartoons. I was always off in the woods, or riding bikes . . . yeah, I lived in a cul-de-sac that had a lot of kids so we were always up to something . . . usually mischief.

# CREATIVITY

*Covid Pet Peeves*  
Christitan Pfening pg. 25

*Audiobooks and Where to Find Them*  
C.J. Elliot pg. 27

*Hope Owns the Universe*  
Christian Pfening pg. 30

*Dreaming of a White's Christmas*  
L.Warren pg 34.

# COVID PET PEEVES

NEW world. NEW restrictions. NEW way of life.

Christian Pfening

**T**here has been a whole lot of “new” due to something as old as a sickness. Unsurprisingly, like with anything new, good or bad, there is a sense of annoyance when learning to deal with the new. I personally have found that one of the most damaging newness of this new world is the disconnect of people: we are out of touch, not knowing whether the person standing six feet from us is comfortable with a hug, handshake, wave, or even us breathing around them. This, like many other things, can bring some annoyances too. The natural response is avoid the awkwardness, and remove ourselves from the situation. Thus, the disconnect. Although, we may be more united than you may think. I did a survey to ask individuals what are the NEW pet-peeves they’ve found that annoy them in this new world of Covid-19. My hope is, by reporting on and sharing with the audience my findings, that you would see a connection with others over these annoyances, and also to find the humor and poignancy in these entertaining and real peeves we all are experiencing on nearly a day-to-day basis.

**1.** One-for-Some-and-Some-for-Uncle-Sam: Some places were opened, such as liquor stores, malls, and other seemingly unnecessary places, while places such as movie theaters, roller rinks, and such were still closed... why? Inconsistencies abound, and that’s not new.

**2.** The New “Walk of Shame”: Businesses now are requesting that individuals, per the government's mandate, to wear masks into their buildings. How often does it happen, that walk back from the building to your vehicle to grab the mask that was forgotten?

**3.** Mirror Accessorizing: Another of the peeves discovered, was probably where that forgotten mask was left. This particular individual said their pet-peeves was, “When people hang their mask on their rear-view mirror.” When I asked why, the individual indicated that it was the new trend of Covid that really is not a cool trend that should never have been started.

**4.** Vehicular Covid: This one, strangely enough, also has to do with people and their vehicles. It’s the peeve of seeing others wear their masks in their cars when driving by themselves or with family members. But who knows, maybe their car has Covid?

**5.** Oxymoronic, or Just Moronic?: Next, the oxymoronic and terribly over-used term of “Social Distancing.” It seems to imply more than just a physical distance, but a social distance that requires an emotional withdrawal too, which causes more division than necessary. Why must the distance be a social distance, instead of just physical distance?

**6.** Old Normal v. New Normal: This is when people say they want things to “go back to normal.” The idea and term of “normal”



Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

is a VERY relative term. It is impossible to name a world event that occurred which then led to the world returning to “normal.” Once the present is past, the normal has now shifted to the new normal, and the past is simply the past, where it shall remain.

7. The church is just a building: Since everything is closed, we can't do ministry anymore. . . or is the church something more than the building itself? Is it necessary for the church to adapt to this new world and continue to minister for the Kingdom of God?

8. “Goodbye” Stranger: No one is friendly to anyone unless they “have to”; it seems as though everyone is so self-involved, they've lost all sense of simple etiquette to be nice. It seems as though the new belief is that being kind or having any sort of decency, will spread the virus. If that's the case, it's news to me.

9. Hey Bro, Your Fly Is Down: When others wear a mask under their nose . . . commit or don't bother. I've heard it likened to having your front zipper down and not caring.

10. Uncertain Days: Finally, when people say that these days are “uncertain” . . . as if before the virus our days were any more certain . . . our next breath isn't guaranteed, I don't see today being any more uncertain, even with this virus. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. Instead, you should say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”-James 4:13-15 CSB

I hope you were able to empathize with these “new” peeves -- both the serious ones and the less serious one. I hope this will cause you to laugh with others, together, over these annoyances we have in this “new” world.

“We're all in this together,” right? Or does that peeve you too?

Now, in all this “newness,” let us strive for tomorrow, for whatever “new” awaits us.



# AUDIOBOOKS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

C.J. Elliot

One question that has likely piqued the interest of families everywhere this Christmas season is what on earth the little ones want for presents. Every year the same banter occurs over toys or experiences like trips to the waterpark. These do make the season extra special for the little ones, for they are easy to shop for. When the innocent question is turned on you, the adult in the family, the world seems to grow dizzy, and you feel like your answers ran dry the day you left for college. What on earth could make your Christmas memorable again? How could one gift make an impact in your own life in a way that you would not have already done for yourself? Here is my list of reasons and options to make audiobooks the right answer to this question. But why, audiobooks? If you are like me, and roughly 15% of the US population, reading can be difficult. From dyslexia to myopia, the world of paperback books can be hard to get into. It's also time-consuming and requires a quiet, well lit, and arguably cozy environment to be thoroughly enjoyed. I can't speak for you, but I often find these things lacking in my life. Except for the reading difficulties, I have an abundance of these! Regardless of your ailment, you can easily find a book on one of the following platforms!

Note: Almost all audiobook platforms offer the first book free when joining a subscription. This detail is not mentioned in each review as it is a standard for the market. The listing is also my personal roundup of some of the best and interesting options

available this season. Please test each and see what fits your needs.

## **Audible Inc.**

Audible is the digital bookmark for audiobooks. Audible began in 1995, and mostly at the behest of Don Kratz, the award-winning journalist. The company started by commercializing the first genuinely digital audio player, four years before the iPod would reinvent the concept. Audible is now known for its new parent company, Amazon, but the 2007 acquisition was merely adding wind to its sails as it was already providing all audiobooks to the iTunes platform. I found audible at the recommendation of not just one Youtuber, but countless as the company chose to sponsor videos instead of paying for traditional advertising. The cost of an audible service is on the higher end of the scale at \$14.95. With the subscription, a user can experience one free credit per month of usage. This credit is good for any purchase on the platform. There is no price limit, as well as exclusive content that Audible produced in house specifically for their users. These exclusives are somewhat infamous in the audiobook market as these publications are only available through Audible and Amazon. For exclusivity, and a free credit each month, they have me hooked. I currently own 173 titles and I have two credits ready to be used. These credits don't expire, and this library will always be available to me even if I chose to hop skip to one of the other providers of audiobooks.



check out books temporarily, returning them in the usual library method. I have found this service to be convenient when looking for a new source for a paper or just wanting to get my mind off my reading list. A free book for a week sounds nice right now. With no fees this service almost sounds like it would reach the top of the list, yet there is a drawback. Since it is tied into the local library, you are limited to what that branch has on hand, and you can't check out a book whilst someone else has already acquired it for the 29-day period. This leaves the most popular books like *Becoming* By Michele Obama to be seemingly perpetually checked out. The second

### **Recorded Books**

Recorded Books, or RB is one of the older companies in the market today. Starting with cassette tapes and laser disks in 1979, Recorded Books broke into a market that was oversaturated with radio, choosing to be the alternative option to the familiar mass media. They claim to be the original audiobook company and currently the largest independent audiobook publisher in the world. The backlog of exclusive titles like J. R. R. Tolkien and Danielle Steel, allows RB to hold a strong footing against the competition. One of the best reasons to try out RB is that their services can be free if you connect through the local Spokane Public Library system. Libraries around the US have partnered with RB to deliver the content that is available on shelves locally to those who can't get out to the libraries. Their catalog fills the gaps that the competition created by allowing users to

drawback with this system is automatic, meaning when your 29 days are up, you lose your book. There is no way to bookmark your progress and if you go back and recheck out the same title immediately your progress isn't saved. Some would say these factors make for a very poor experience over time, but if you are in a pinch and don't want to spend money, the right title can bring you a great deal of enjoyment despite the return date.

### **Libro.fm**

Libro.fm's name sounds less like a book marketplace and more like an odd computer file tucked away in your recycling bin. Don't let the name fool you. This service is very neat. Libro.fm was envisioned as a service for local brick and mortar bookstores to have an audiobook market, where the local store can

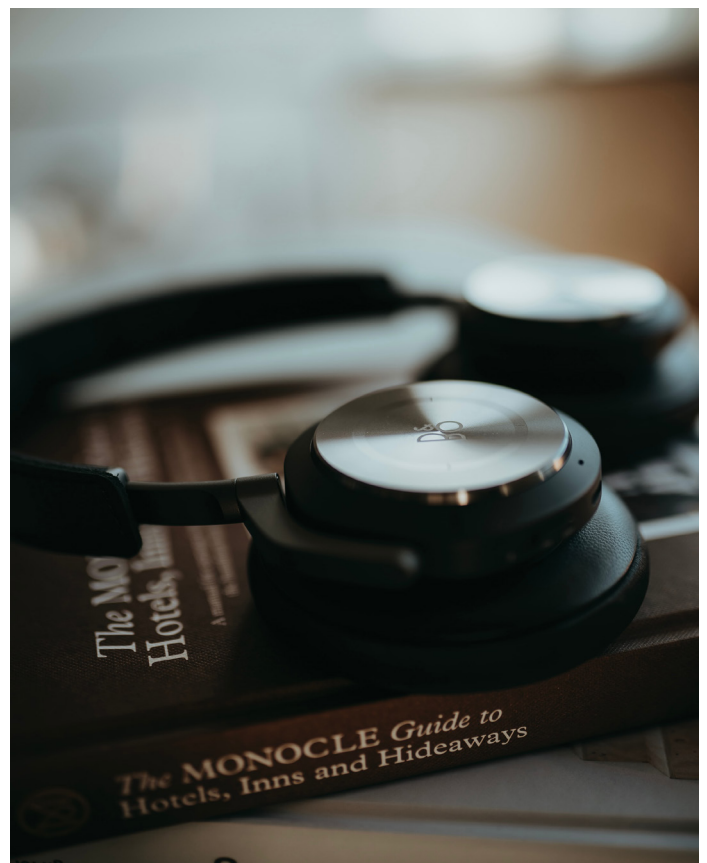
sell you the product directly and make profit off the sale. Before Libro, the local bookstore could only offer you physical items, such as the cassette decks and five-volume CD cases that contained a novella about Abraham Lincoln's cat.

The onset is very appealing, especially in a year that has killed more brick and mortar local stores in some lifetimes. The cost is like Audible running \$14.99 a month after a free trial month and each following month offering a credit-towards purchases. You also get to keep the books you acquire despite any future changes in your subscription. Libro.fm is aiming to be the "new different" option for audiobooks, making a stance on supporting local stores and not big corporations. They are intentionally targeting current Audible users offering twice the number of credits per month if they switch over. The website even has an easy way to gift subscriptions to people, ranging from a single month to a full year supply of audiobooks. A drawback of this service is the lack of an all-inclusive app where purchases can be made. The only way to get books is via the web browser on a computer. Once you make your purchase you can then send the book to your device of choice. Not every bookstore is partnering with Libro.fm, and that might mean your local store has chosen to avoid it or go with a different option. If you are willing to put up with the inconvenience of using a web browser for every purchase and if supporting locals is important to you, I highly recommend giving Libro.fm a try.

### **Librivox**

From the Vox populi to the local library,

this book market isn't really a market at all. If you are ready for something a little different than the aforementioned platforms, let me introduce you to the completely free audiobook option, Librivox. This website allows you to download audiobooks for free, but the focus of the website isn't the best sellers, or even modern titles. No, this is about opensource audiobooks. Would you like to listen to an open source book read aloud to you by volunteers? This is the platform that feels a little more like the internet culture in a quirky yet enjoyable package. I wouldn't suggest this to the non-technology savvy listener as the files are downloaded as mp3 and will be stored locally on your devices. This isn't a great option for mobile users as some smartphones do not allow their users access to the folders that these files would be located in. Audiobooks are great and all, but if I need to dial my voicemail to listen to them then my time would be better spent reading a paperback.



# HOPE OWNS THE UNIVERSE

Christian Pfening

Space: the final frontier.  
These are the purchases  
of the starship Earth.

It's mission: to explore  
and purchase strange  
new worlds, to seek  
out new life and new  
civilizations, to boldly  
buy where no man has  
bought before.

The concept of Extraterrestrial Real Estate is not as new as some people might think. The idea of it has been floating around, at least in conversation, since the 1890's. Although, nothing significant was actually done about it until 1966.

The Space Treaty of 1966, published by the United States (but also includes and applies to another 110 nations) declared eight things about extraterrestrial objects. For example,

1. The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind.
2. Outer space shall be free for exploration and use by all States.
3. Outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means.

The Moon Treaty, finished in 1979, ten years after the first successful moon landing, only ratified and recognized the treaty as sovereign in 18 countries as of 2018, not including the United States. This treaty states that it is a "multilateral treaty that turns jurisdiction of all celestial bodies (including the orbits around such bodies) over to the participant countries." While it is ratified, this treaty seems to have been widely brushed under the rug. If the moon is not owned by the countries who signed the treaty, those who have

claimed it, or those who have walked on it, then who in the world owns it?

On June 15, 1936, Arthur Dean Lindsay, a man from Ocilla, Georgia, made the first territorial claim to space. On this day, Lindsay went to the Irwin County Courthouse with a Deed of Title saying that he owned "all of the property known as planets, islands-of-space or other matter." After this day, Lindsay was known in Georgia as the "man who owned the universe." According



to sources, Lindsay had no other reason to claim that outer space was his, other than no one else had claimed it. But, as far as my research reveals, since Lindsay only registered himself as the owner in a little town in Georgia, no one but those in the little town really recognized him as the rightful owner.

More recently, the man who claims to own the moon is Dennis M. Hope of Gardnerville, Nevada. According to The New York Times, Hope made the claim back in 1980 by writing the United Nations a letter recognizing The Space Treaty of 1966 citing that since it only restricts national claim, but not private ownership, he then would be the one to claim the moon.

No one ever responded to his letter to deny his claim.

Since his claim in 1980, Hope has made millions of US dollars selling acres of the moon, both to regular citizens and to celebrities such as Barbara Walters, John Travolta, Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, and former U.S. Presidents George H.W. Bush, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan. Hope also has ownership claims for Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter's moon Io, and Pluto; which he has also been selling.

Unlike most earthly land-owners, Hope welcomes the exploration of his real estate, in accordance with the Space Treaty. But in 2019, when China announced that they plan to build a moon base, Hope wrote a letter to their government telling them that they would never be able to build any bases unless they made a licensing agreement with him.

No one responded to this letter either.

Strangely enough, since he has the legal documents claiming his private ownership to the land, and has found the perfect loophole in the Space Treaty, his complaints and claims are difficult to dispute. However, his deeds are only registered in the U.S. and it is unclear how the world recognizes Hope's ownership of the land. Therefore, it is difficult to predict how the Chinese will handle the situation.

If, then, Mr. Hope is the rightful private owner of the location of 90% of sci-fi movies, then are all of these companies selling this real estate owned by him?

On Mr. Hope's website LunarEmbassy.com, Hope says,

"Beware because there are COPYCAT COMPANIES selling property with NO claim. Click the link to read who some of them are.

A few of the biggest frauds are Lunar Land .com, Lunar Registry .com, Buy Mars. com and Moon Estates .com – They are simply lying, 2 used to be our Ambassadors until we caught them behaving badly.

The ONLY Authorized Lunar Embassies are this site in the USA, South Korea, and Japan.

We can ship to you anywhere in the World from this Site Only.

There are a dozen Fraudulent sites out there claiming they can sell you my land, they cannot. They have no legally registered claim, only I do.

None of them have a registered Trademark either, nor media nor copyright as they claim. Only the Lunar Embassy does.

No matter what others say on their

sites you are not getting valid, legally claimed Extraterrestrial Real Estate issued by the Lunar Embassy.

Only buy property on the Moon from the Lunar Embassy . Only buy Mars land from the Lunar Embassy.

Only buy Lunar Land from the Lunar Embassy®.

There are hundreds of articles about myself, Dennis Hope and the Lunar Embassy ®, there is a reason for that. Do not be fooled by these other sites claiming to sell you land."

So, obviously, Mr. Hope is very serious about his claim and sale of this Extra Terrestrial Real Estate. When an individual goes out of their way to discredit and undercut other companies for doing the same thing that he is, there must be something serious about it.

As you can probably see, Mr. Hope has been very profitable for making his initial claim on these parts of the universe.

So, who buys land offered for sale that takes a rocketship to get to? Well, people like me. I happen to own an acre on Mars, so if the legalities ever get worked out, my descendents could one day help rule the stars. It is a fun novelty gift for individuals who love and appreciate the mystery of the universe. It is fun, fairly cheap, and a unique gift to surprise someone with this holiday season, outer space real estate will set you apart as a gift-giver of extraordinary talent.

**Mr. Hope, also on his website, sells the acres of land for varying prices:**

**Moon: \$24.99/acre**

**Moon (Apollo 11 Lunar Landing Site): \$44.99/acre**

**Prime View Ionian Properties (Jupiter's Moon Io): \$24.99/acre**

**Mars: \$24.99/acre**

**Mercury: \$24.99/acre**

**Venus: \$24.99/acre**

**Extraterrestrial Passport and Nationality: \$22.99/each**

**Pluto (only sold in its entirety): \$250,000**

**Adding Name to Deed: +\$2.50**

# DREAMING OF A WHITE'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

L. Warren

Hosting is much less about what kind of food you have, or how nice or clean you keep your home. Rather, excellent hosting lies in the relationships that are deepened and rejuvenated through intentional conversation, good food, and an open and welcoming posture. This Christmas season, hosting can seem extra daunting, either due to the pandemic season, or simply because you do not feel confident in your hosting abilities. With the intention of improving my own hosting abilities, I interviewed Lisha White, a hosting wizard, for some tips.

Known at Whitworth Church for being an excellent hostess, White told me about her favorite things about hosting, the amount of work that goes into hosting gatherings well, and some tips for young people, or those who are new to hosting. White works in finances for Whitworth University, and is married to the senior pastor at Whitworth Church. Having so much of life surrounding the university has integrated the White family into hosting students and local families.

White says that her favorite thing about hosting gatherings is the opportunity to serve and connect with people in an atmosphere that is a tad more comfy than the church foyer. Her main goal in opening her home is not to have the largest turnout, or the best food, or to be talked about for the next week. It's to make those she is with "feel valued and loved for the moments they are in our home."

This desire stems from White and her husband's philosophy on hosting, which was determined before they were married 28 years ago. White shared with me, "We firmly believe in relational ministry, modeled after the incarnational ministry of Jesus Christ. When someone is in our home, eating good food, enjoying a laugh, chatting about their lives, there is an openness, a realness, that goes so far beyond the interactions we have at the church. Somehow people let their guard down a little bit more in a home, especially if it is one where they know that they are safe and loved."

In the White's home, as they have walked through life together, brought four well-adjusted children into the world, and pastored churches, Lisha and Daniel have never sacrificed hosting due to varying seasons of life. On a pastor's salary, there were many years where there was not enough funding to host a "proper" dinner party, but the Whites always found a way around the challenges. "We would invite people over for appetizers and games, or ask them to bring their favorite drinks. We found ways around the finances to have a good time." From being a newly married couple, to having small children running around the house, and now having their kids hang out with the younger ones, the White family has pursued a relational ministry of hosting.

Many beginning hosts struggle through trepidation. White suggests, "What is important is not how



perfectly the food is prepared or how nice your house is; what is important is that you offer your home, and your attention, and your service to someone for a moment of your lives. That opportunity to engage in a relationship is far more valuable than any of the logistics, and it is why we are doing this in the first place. Your goal is to create a welcoming environment where you clearly show that you are physically and emotionally available to your guests. So, keep your perspective on what is important, and don't worry if everything else isn't just right or doesn't go as you planned." White also mentions that no matter the size, the intention for hosting is the same, "to show the love of Christ to people by inviting them into your home and sharing part of your lives with them."

White talks about some advice she and her husband were given early in their marriage, that "having people over is not about hosting; it's about expressing

hospitality, which is a deeply Christian expression of care." This posture of serving and showing care for the people surrounding the White family starts in the intention of hosting, and the care and love put into preparing and executing such an "event" of dinner and conversation.

For the average host, conversation can be difficult. From trying to get dinner on the table, making sure everyone has drinks, and taking coats, hosting can be stressful and distract from the original purpose. White offers some practical tips for how to balance these stressors.

1. You don't need to have all the food cooked and ready right when people arrive. She suggests, "It gives an opportunity for early arrivers to have something to do while we wait for everyone else to arrive."





2. Delegate tasks to others in your home. The White home delegates tasks to their children in order to train them for their own homes in the future. She says, “They [the kids] have to clean the house, and then they have to talk to people they maybe wouldn’t otherwise enjoy talking to. They have to be aware of other people’s needs (‘Can I take your coat? Can I get you a drink?’)”. If you are hosting alone, it may be easier to use the, “help yourself to drinks on the counter,” or “make yourself at home,” methods.
3. Don’t worry. “Don’t get discouraged if you don’t do things right in the beginning. . . Don’t worry if things aren’t perfect . . . What is important is not how perfectly the food is prepared or how nice your house is, what is important is that you offer your home, and your attention, and your service to someone for a moment of your lives.”
4. Encourage your guest to tell you about their passions. She says, “Look for areas of interest that

are common ground, or find that person’s areas of passion. Once you stumble on their passions and interests, conversation flows pretty easily.”

While the preparations of cleaning and shopping for groceries, making food, and the sometimes awkward conversations may be overwhelming, just remember the reason for hosting; loving on others. This Christmas season, we celebrate the reminder of Christ coming to earth, and attempt to emulate his ministry. As White says, “Christ, the Sovereign Lord of all creation, came into our world to eat with us, to laugh with us, to cry with us, to walk with us. He came to us so that we could be in relationship with Him, and He modeled a ministry of relationship. He didn’t just preach to people. He ate in their homes. He walked with them on the road. He sat with them in their sorrow. He made their parties more fun. If this is the way our Lord reached and served people, then shouldn’t we do the same?”

Don't trust  
anybody who  
doesn't have  
a sense of  
humour!

# T R U T H

*Why Winter?*  
by Dr. Michael Orr- Pg. X

*The Culture of Minimalism*  
by L. Warren- Pg.X

*Stickerology*  
by Dr. Kay Tronsen- Pg. X

*Disciplines in the Darkness*  
by Dr. Michael Kibbe, Rachel Deakin, and  
Shelby Mogge- Pg. X

# WHY WINTER?

Winter Devotional- Dr. Michael Orr



Recently, I was asked by a friend if I might share some insights about how he should respond to the challenges that he is facing. As I pondered how to counsel him, I was reminded again of the wise words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:1-4~ *For everything there is a season, A time for every activity under heaven, A time to plant and a time to harvest, A time to tear down and a time to build up, A time to grieve and a time to dance.*

These inspired words remind us that life is universally characterized by

contrasting circumstances, activities and emotions that are sovereignly used by God to transform us into Christ's likeness.

This year has been filled with unexpected circumstances that have given rise to conflicting activities and emotions. As we review what has transpired during 2020, how do we better discern the meaning of past and present events as well as how do we react to them in such a way as to promote our own spiritual growth?

Mark Buchanan, in his discerning book, *Spiritual Rhythm*, seeks to use the overarching metaphor of seasonality to help us better understand how our spiritual development occurs. He begins by describing spiritual winters: their causes, their characteristics and their redeeming practices. I will attempt to follow a similar line of thought in suggesting how we all might better navigate this and future “winters” we will inevitably face.

Let’s consider the causes of those cold winds that blow into our lives. First, there is the constant reality of our own sinful nature. Our propensity to react in self-destructive ways can produce a chill from within as well as lower the temperature of our relationship with others. Paul describes such desires as, “sinful, earthly things lurking within you” (Col. 3:5). Martin Luther claims that, “The worst enemies we have are lodged in our own hearts.”

We should also be sensitive to the sinful world order that is responsible for the antagonism we witness between individuals and social groups. Such divisions can make us feel isolated and defeated. Thomas Merton understands that when he writes, “The world is in crisis. A kind of madness sweeps through human society, threatening to destroy it altogether.”

Then there are also the chilling effects of life’s

misfortunes. The current viral pandemic and its debilitating restrictions are a reminder of how such events can transform the life we enjoy into a dark winter. Francois Fenelon believes that “God makes readying me for a career change. I was in a holding pattern for five years, but when the opportunity came, it was clear over the ensuing years the waiting was an essential preparation for my success.

Winter calls us to the good work – of praying, pruning and waiting. Surprisingly, it also offers us good gifts. One of those gifts is the opportunity to reimagine our lives. What I mean is that we are given the time to see our lives in a truer light; see them for what they truly are and for what truly matters to us. Previously I referred to a five years of vocational winter preparation. It was during those five years that I recognized my passion for teaching and the skills that God had given me for the subjects that I would teach. It is only as I look back that I can fully discern how important the gifts of winter are. Except for winter, none of us would be here. None of us could have imagined it.

Then there are also the chilling effects of life’s misfortunes. The current viral pandemic and its debilitating restrictions are a reminder of how such events can transform the life we enjoy into a dark winter. Francois Fenelon



believes that "God makes use of such disappointments and the failures which attend human prosperity, to detach us from the created world and its good things."

Another universal cause of chilling emotions is the often difficult life transitions that we face. These can include developmental changes such as the passage from adolescence to adulthood, physical changes caused by disease or ageing, and vocational changes that can make us feel ill-prepared and disorientated.

During such snowy seasons what are the activities that we can engage in to help us not only survive but even flourish amid such uncomfortable circumstances? I find myself repeating a series of almost ritual activities in late fall to not only prepare me for winter extremes but also to ensure that my spring will be more productive.

One critical practice during emotional winters is the cultivation of extended times of prayer. During my wife's recovery from two falls in one year, I found myself driven to prayer both for her and myself. What was a very difficult time became a season of growing spiritual intimacy with God and between my wife and me.

Another spiritual practice of winter is pruning. Recently I was asked by my neighbor if I would prune back a bush that was blocking the view from her front window. In making her appeal, she repeatedly said, "Don't worry about cutting it back too much; you can't kill it." The goal of pruning is not to diminish growth but to promote it. Jesus says in John 15 that the role of his Father as vine dresser in our lives is to prune us so that "it [we] might bear more fruit" (v.3).

As believers we are called to proactively self-prune during wintery seasons. Such pruning can include temporarily cutting back engagements, responsibilities, and volunteer service in order to strengthen our core, so that spring will find us lean and strong, ready to bear much fruit.

Still another good winter work is waiting. Winter forces us to wait and waiting enables us to grow. I am mentoring two individuals right now who are being forced to wait for things they are anticipating happening in the near future. What can be the benefit of such waiting? My experience has been that active waiting builds our faith and gives God time to prepare us for divine callings that are ahead. Such times of gestation are critical to our ability to meet the challenges that we will face. I found this to be true many years ago when God was readying me for a career change. I was in a holding pattern for five years, but when the opportunity came, it was clear over the ensuing years the waiting was an essential preparation for my success.

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# THE CULTURE OF MINIMALISM

L. Warren



**M**inimalism fights against the concept that material items will bring joy. This social trend argues that the more you own directly correlates to a person's security in life which can be traced back to after the Great Depression. During the Great Depression there was a huge lack of general luxuries and necessary items in the family home. So it makes sense that when World War II was over, those same kids who grew up during the Great Depression were able to earn money and support a family, and buy the necessities and luxuries that the world could offer. This trend of accumulating items continues and has been questioned more frequently. The newest pursuit of eliminating clutter has gained the modern title of 'minimalism'.

Minimalism has grown in cultural popularity over the last decade. From the author of *Spark Joy*, Marie Kondo, and documentary filmmakers like Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, minimalism has gained popularity in the United States since 2015. These content creators suggest that getting rid of material items relieves stress and creates an

environment of comfort and ease. However, their vision is simplistic and only half thought through. In fact, this idea of throwing things away in order to create a stress-free environment is an elitist mentality that does not address the emotional stress that can come from getting rid of a safety net and sentimentality. This is not conducive for a healthy lifestyle as these content creators suggest. Minimalism is a luxury that not all people can afford. Stemming back from the Great Depres-

sion, the gathering and keeping of material items has been vital for lower class families. There is an emotional safety net to having stuff that is often overlooked by minimalist influencers today. Marie Kondo asks her trademark question, "Does this spark joy?" But that is the wrong question to ask. Since the Great Depression there was a general lack of financial security, so families would keep anything they needed, even if it didn't work anymore, in the hopes that they could fix it, and use it later. The idea of telling these people to get rid of something because it does not spark joy would seem to be insensitive.

Extreme forms of minimalism are practiced where people don't have cars, or a dishwasher, or a tumble drier. This type of material minimalism works well with a lifestyle of time and resources. However, for the average American family, the idea of getting rid of their family transportation seems utterly ridiculous and stressful. In cities



with reliable and fast public transportation, this may work, but for the majority of the United States, public transportation consists of city buses, which are slow, unsafe, and have inadequate seating for children. The thought of giving up a family car to trade for the city bus seems laughable. The ability to throw things away, or recycle, depending on your convictions, suggests that a person can just buy another one if they find they need it. This idea only applies to those who can afford it, and is insulting to those who cannot. As the years have progressed, my parents have earned more money and have fewer mouths to feed. This has given them the luxury of, for example, buying a new washing machine, including the warranty, and allowing them to get rid of all the extras collecting dust in their basement, something they could never do before.

For some, a decluttered home with few belongings is a peaceful atmosphere which leads to less stress for the person living there. On the other hand, there are some who would see a nearly empty home and their stress would be amplified because of the lack of security net.

For college students, there may be a chord

of dissonance when it comes to this subject. Social media content influences college students by the message that it is better to have fewer things. But college students live in the in-between phase of life where they don't have much financial security. If Marie Kondo were to come into my college home and ask about every item to see if it sparked joy, she would be met with, "No, but I cannot afford to buy a different one," or, "No, but what if I need it in two months?" The idea of minimalism tends to be idealistic, a glamorous life that only happens on the TV screen.

I don't want to imply that a hoarding nature is realistic or healthy, but there is something to be said about stewardship and fixing what you already have. For some, fixing a washer is not worth the cost, but for others, there really is no other option. For some, getting rid of a shirt because it has a hole in it makes the most sense, but for those who cannot afford to buy a new shirt, repairing the damage is far more cost effective. As the piles grow this Christmas season, it is important to remember that there is no moral judgement attached to material piling, though the minimalism trend would say otherwise.



# STICKEROLOGY

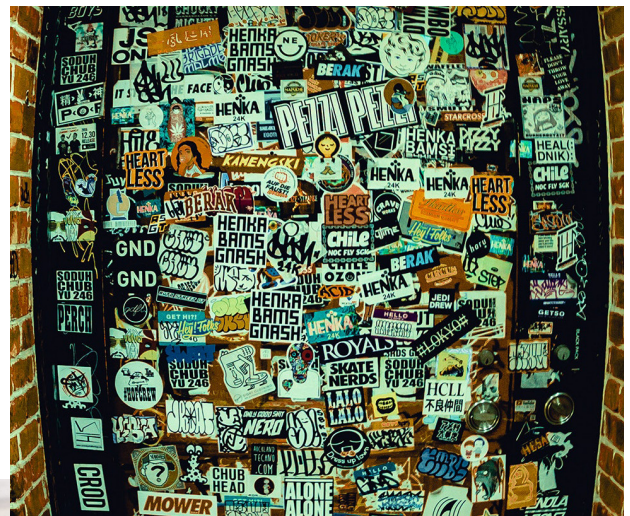
Dr. Kay Tronsen

As a non-trendy aging-in-place professor, I couldn't help but notice the stickers adorning my students' laptops (and water bottles)—creative, colorful, funny, and eye-catching. As our magazine team met, I suggested we highlight this stickermania, this sticker-y communication – Great Northern University style. I was interested; it caught my attention so, of course, I did what every non-trendy aging-in-place professor does: I googled it. I actually found articles that declared this to be “the trend that has struck with us” (University of Connecticut); a “laptop sticker culture” (University of Delaware); and a “nationwide phenomenon” (Stanford). Well . . . and here I thought it was something new, some new possibility for communication study. Who knew?



Why stickers? A sociology professor from the College of Charleston said that this trend “represents a change in how we present ourselves to others.” Other reasons for stickerizing stuff run the gamut from conversation starters, collages of identity, advertisements for clubs and organizations, travel journals, to expressions of faith. Oh, and it's fun.

No matter the purpose or the particularity of the rules (overlap OK or not? How many stickers?), stickers look like they will be sticking around for a while. Excuse me while I go shopping. I think I hear Redbubble calling my name.



# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN THE DARKNESS

Dr. Michael Kibbe, Racheal Deakin,  
and Shelby Mogge

**1** Pressing into the **solitude** of winter . . . some of us have had quite enough solitude this year, thank you very much! So when more “alone time” comes knocking this Advent season, you’ll be tempted to think “anything but that, please!” And you might, in fact, need to push against the default mode of a solitary holiday. And yet, you might also need to lean into that solitude a bit harder—meaning, look at it as an opportunity for God to have your full and undivided attention rather than a necessary evil to somehow endure until people appear once more on your horizon.

**2** **Community** . . . community is an expression of our faith. Investing in community necessitates effort. As image bearers, we are to seek community that cultivates depth and significance.

**3** Seeking **Worship** . . . God calls us to worship in community and in solitude. Worship can look unique as you head back to your hometowns. It can look like a walk in the woods, reciting Scripture, partaking in Communion, singing, dancing, drawing, and so many other things. These different forms of worship will help guide you into a place of praising the Lord for who He is in your life.

**4** Personal **Reflection** . . . as we venture back home we can be confident that major growth has taken place. This past semester we have endured many trials that have grown and matured us. Reflecting on the past and current season can be helpful to recall how God has been and still is working in our lives. Taking time to reflect can look like journaling about what your life has looked like this past season. Listing the good and the bad. Answering what your expectations were for the season. Coming to terms with losses and celebrating the victories of the season.



**5 Meditation** on the Season of Christmas . . . in the season of Christmas, Jesus’ birth story is of great importance, but we need not stop there. Christ’s incarnation was the beginning of a hope for a new creation. In meditating on Christmas, I want to challenge you readers to think past the Christmas story to the implications it has within the biblical narrative.



**6 The Calendar** . . . ADVENT. “Christmas” begins on December 25 and continues for eleven more days. ADVENT is what we are in right now. You know about Advent candles, right? Hope. Peace. Joy. Love. Christ. Advent means “coming”—and it’s the coming of Christ that promises hope, peace, joy, and love. So here’s a challenge: find a Scripture, each week, to meditate on and/or memorize that has one of those words along with a reference to Christ’s “coming.” “He came and preached peace to those who were far off, and to those who were near” (Ephesians 2:17). “Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming” (1 Pet 1:13).



**7 Time in Scripture** . . . daily time in Scripture is such a habit-based thing. And habits, almost of necessity, happen at the same time in the same location every day. So there’s nothing that kills habits so fast as being in a different location with different people and a completely different schedule. So set a reasonable expectation for yourself—maybe it’s only a few minutes right before bed each day. You can control that much, at least, in a season where “self-control” is hardly the characteristic virtue.

**8 Physical exercise** . . . probably not in your favorite “spiritual disciplines” book. But it turns out God created us as whole persons, and, unsurprisingly, that means our physical and emotional and psychological and spiritual states are interrelated. So exercise is good for the mind and the body and the soul. It also means God invites us to steward our bodies like we steward the rest of creation. You don’t need a gym membership, fancy equipment, fancy clothes, or even that much time. Walk. Run. Hike. You can spend hours in God’s creation. Pushups. Situps. Squats. You can completely exhaust yourself in ten minutes. One way or another, God created us to move.



**9 Establishing a Sabbath** . . . setting aside a specific time for intentionality with our Creator is certainly important in our walk with Jesus. “Often times we expect Sabbath to be an emotionally charged experience. Instead it’s a practice of everyday faithfulness as you seek to intentionally live out your position before God.”





# OUR PEOPLE



**Lewie Warren - Chief Editor & Design**

I have always enjoyed the winter season, mainly for the copious amounts of hot chocolate my mom would let me drink. Now it is my favorite time of the year because I get to laugh and connect with my family, like we used to when we were small.



**CJ Elliot - Writer & Design**

Growing up in the warm south, there was never a white christmas in our family. Flying or diving home feels magical now, when the world is covered with snow.



**Shelby Mogge - Writer & Design**

The thing I admire most about Christmas is being able to spend time with loved ones. I enjoy relaxing at home with a coffee in hand and watching old home movies from my early childhood.



**Christian Pfening - Writer & Design**

My favorite thing about Christmas is all the “once-a-year” foods we get to have. There are so many memories and traditions that get brought up when you take that one bite!

**Dr. Kay Tronsen - Writer, Design, Faculty Advisor**

My favorite thing about Christmas is that it directs our attention toward family. Normal routines vanish and that space allows us to re-engage with those closest to us.



SEASON'S GREETINGS!

