Inside: letter from the editor, words for friends, word from the earth, a reflection on the shootings in Boston, and practical advice on health, advocacy, finances, post-seminary life, and more!
To the APTS Community:

I guess “The Practical Side” of ministry and seminary life is something that matters to a lot of y’all because our last issue of Kairos was a great success! Last issue, we had recipe and snack suggestions, financial advice, and tips on health and wellness. In this issue, you’ll find more reflections on the practical part of our life. I know that I was excited to see the wealth of information members of our community had to share and I’m so glad that we have even more insight to offer.

This week has been an interesting time to ponder the balance between the more and less practical elements of life. We are in a season where most of us are bogged down with papers, cramming for exams, or scrambling to make plans for the future. But this week we were pulled out of our struggles with the daily minitua of seminary life by two national tragedies. These events had us dropping homework plans to watch the news or spend some much needed time in the comfort of friends and family.

And yet even as we mourned together, lifted up prayers, asked hard questions, and waited for new information, we went on living. We went to class, we worshipped in chapel, we cooked dinner, we studied. It is a challenge to find a way to live in the tension between the practical elements of life and the bigger things that keep us lost in thought. It is a challenge we undertake here at seminary and one that we will help others manage when we venture out into the world and into our ministries.

In the face of such a task, it is a comfort to know that we do not meet these challenges alone, but in a loving community. This community is full of a diversity of wisdom. When we share that wisdom with each other and commit to learning and growing together, we find a way to hold onto the big things and the little things, the abstract and the practical. And always, at the center of it all, is God.

Enjoy this wisdom from your friends, and be sure to share your own!

Layton Williams, Editor

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(Kairos Logo designed by Jo Kretzler)
When trying to practically apply what all that we learn about in seminary, we don’t have to go looking for opportunities to put what we have learned into practice. Life, in all its glory has a tendency to smack us in the face. We can apply what we’ve learned all the time. Granted, it may not be the sought after opportunity in the pulpit or the lectern. We all have classes and subjects that get under our skin, you know the ones that press us and push us outside our comfort zones? Those subjects and hot sizzlin’ topics are consistent areas in which the academy and the Holy Spirit confront me on a daily basis. Black liberation theology, 23 years going strong. Feminist/Womanist theology, check. Queer theology, proudly declared on my left ring finger. Not to say that all these topics in academia fully encompass my identity, as we rarely talk about their intersectionalities. However, ablism, agism and more than I would like to admit, those who believe theologically and practically different from me is where I get smacked in the face.

Practicality meets academic training when I take these precious and privileged things that I have learned and integrate them, intentionally, into everyday life. What if I spent more time with my friends with disabilities? What if I listened to the parishioner who complains about the font being at the front? What if I meet the racist, sexist, or homophobic person where they are, so they could see me as human instead of a threat? Opportunities like these occur every minute of every day. I pray constantly that we all have the courage to take advantage of what’s already before our eyes, remembering that we don’t have to search for the practical.
FOOD/NUTRITION:

1. SUGAR, FLOUR, AND FAT: Research that has been done due to the rise of obesity has shown that these three foods affect the same parts of our brain that stimulate drugs do (cocaig, xanax). This means that when we eat these foods we experience a sense of euphoria. This is why we love desserts and fried foods! But we can in a sense become addicted or crave these foods because of this. You do not deprive yourself of these foods, but try to limit them each day. If you start your day with too much sugar, fat or flour, you are probably more likely to eat more of it throughout the day. Try to save it for an afternoon snack or possibly at the end of the day (in moderation).

2. WATER: I have such a hard time doing this regularly, but drinking enough water everyday has shown to improve weight loss, gives you more energy, and makes your skin softer and healthier. I have a 24 oz. water bottle and my goal each day is to fill it 3X a day.

3. PROTEIN: I know, I know, I’m a Vegetarian, what do I know about protein? Well since I can’t eat meat I’ve had to search high and far for alternative sources of protein. Protein is so crucial to burning fat, building muscle, and curbing your hunger throughout the day. Meat-eaters eat more lean meats (turkey, chicken, fish). If you’re a meat eater or a vegetarian looking for more alternatives to tofu and beans here are some that I love: Greek yogurt (I love Chobani with fruit on the bottom), protein shakes with banana and peanut butter, chick peas – hummus, egg white sandwich/omelet, nuts (I love pistachios!), veggie burger patty (Morning Star – spicy black bean, yum!) Try to eat protein in every meal and especially after a workout!

FITNESS:

1. HIIT - High Intensity Interval Training: This type of workout is all the rage right now. It also requires less time! It combines the best of cardio and weight training into one workout. “Studies show that 27 minutes of HIIT 3X a week produces the same anaerobic and aerobic as 60 minutes of cardio a week”. A sample of this would be: Walk or slow jog for 75 seconds, then run/sprint for 60 seconds. Repeat this for 12 cycles/27 minutes. For weight lifting this can be done by doing one exercise like a squat or burpee for 20 seconds then rest for 10 seconds. Repeat this for 8 cycles/4 minutes. (this is the format we follow in Boot Camp). Here is a great article that puts in simply and gives examples: http://www.outlawfitnesshq.com/the-complete-guide-to-interval-training-infographic/

2. Stretch! I learned this the hard way last year with a reoccurring back injury. The necessity of stretching before a workout is highly debated. I have found that I don’t need to stretch before I workout, unless I have a problem area like my back. Stretching after a workout is very important! It helps get oxygen back into your muscles and helps in their repair. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds while breathing deeply and do that at least twice for each stretch. Yoga with Michelle and Laureen is a great way to stretch too!

3. Change it up! Try not to get stuck doing the same workouts for months. Your body and muscles can get so used to the same motions/routines that it will no longer be challenged. Changing it up will trick your body and shock your muscles into working harder again!
SPIRITUALITY/MENTAL HEALTH

1. Groups: After taking a Group-therapy class at UT, participating in group therapy, and facilitating a group at the Travis County Jail, I have fallen in love with this form of therapy/intervention. Whether it is a support group (AA, Grief and loss, Cancer, single parent group) or therapy group where the goal is more to challenge each other and practice feedback, groups can provide a wider perspective of yourself through your interaction with others. There are TONS for groups in Austin. I promise you, you won’t be disappointed! Here is a resource to find groups in Austin: http://www.austingroups.org/groups/groups-directory-all/userslist

2. Spiritual Practice: Similar to fitness, you have to try different things to find what you love. I know we all had to reflect on this in our vocation and ministry class. Meditation, guided scripture readings, breathing exercises, journaling, morning prayer, talking with a friend, serving the homeless, spiritual direction, watching the sunrise/sunset, playing with your dog or cat, driving up to Mt. Bonnell, and so much more. Get creative.

3. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT): I could write a whole article on this. But the basic idea is that you can learn to control your negative thoughts by identifying the underlying emotions or feelings and retraining your brain to replace these thoughts with positive ones. Many of us can spend our day filling our mind with negative, self-deprecating thoughts, like, “I’m an idiot” “You’re a failure” “I could have done better” etc. We can be our own worst critic by saying things to ourselves that we would never say to anyone else. It can affect your mood, how you feel about and perceive yourself, and how you present yourself to the world. Practice identifying these moments and thinking of a kinder or gentler thought like, “I worked really hard on this” “I’m easily affected because I care” “An A- is actually quite an accomplishment!” A counselor can definitely help you with this!

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) explains it in more depth on their website www.nami.org http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?
Section=About_Treatments_and_Supports&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=141590
Eight people have been executed since I started writing these articles in Kairos. Not a thing I’ve done this year can change that, and there’s nothing I can do to stop the next eight court-ordered executions. I know that, but practically speaking, that’s not the point. The point is not that I can’t change the world. The point is that we can change the world.

No one gets very far alone. Yet somehow, along the way, we’ve been taught that we should be able to survive by ourselves, without any help. This changes the way we talk about what it means to be a Christian. It changes what we dare to hope for. We know the journey well between the thoughts “I can’t change the world” and “it’s not my job to change the world.” We know that journey so well that we forget it is our job as the church to try to change the world. The best way to start trying is by bringing people together. The Spirit can and will take care of the rest.

It’s so much harder to despair when in relationship with one’s neighbor, and that’s the point, too. It’s easy to scoff in spiritual isolation when Peter tells us “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day.” We want the kingdom to come now. In community, we remember that we have a part in building the kingdom. Each time we gather hand in hand around the communion table to pray for the heart our state has just stopped, we bear witness in expectant hope that “the Lord is not slow about the Lord’s promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

It’s hard to come to the Lord for repentance alone, and I’m not sure any of us would be in seminary if we were satisfied with that idea. I think the church is about coming together as an act of repentance for all the divisions we create, help create, or don’t mind existing within. Coming together is always the first step, and the Spirit will always take the second one.

The next execution is scheduled for Thursday, the 25th. If no appeal is successful, and no delay occurs, Corpus Christi will be joining hands with students at Seminary of the Southwest to broaden the circle around the table, and with it, to broaden hope of change as well. These articles have said about all they can say. All that’s left to say is “Come.”
In seminary, we stretch our minds every day. Whether it’s in the classroom learning that there are actually two creation stories, or in chapel hearing a mind-blowing sermon, or in our internships, realizing the amount of work it actually takes. But as we’re hunched over desks, laptops, and books, how often do we stop to stretch our bodies? Being healthy is about nurturing mind, soul, and body. We focus so much on our mental and spiritual health that we often neglect our bodies. The Kairos staff chose to do two issues on the practical side of ministry in order to help bring awareness to the importance of holistic wellness and to offer a variety of suggestions for “getting in shape”—mentally, spiritually, and physically.

I’ve had a hard time developing good habits for well-being while in seminary. I’ve bounced around to this or that, just trying to find what works for me. This semester, I have been doing yoga. Michele Goff and Laureen Suba, who have extensive knowledge of this practice, offer free yoga classes each Monday night at 6 pm. I have been curious about yoga for several years, but I felt too self-conscious to go to classes. I always thought I would feel left out even in a beginner’s class. “I can’t move that way. I can’t keep up. I don’t know anything. People are going to judge me.” These thoughts kept me away from yoga. But the prospect of doing yoga with my friends in a familiar environment (As a liturgy nerd, I do feel so comfortable in the lit lab!) was something that appealed to me. So I took the plunge, and I love it.

After I finish each week, I feel great. Michele and Laureen understand the toll that school takes on our bodies. We do stretches to work out tight shoulders, aching lower backs, sore hips, cramped fingers and wrists. I can tell that I’m getting a good full-body workout, and it makes me feel strong. They encourage you to pay attention to your body, to every movement, and to listen when it tells you to stop. If you can’t do something or if it causes pain, don’t do it. They view their yoga classes as a ministry and also incorporate prayer and meditation into the routines. I feel in touch with my body and with the Holy Spirit. I have even started doing some simple movements on my own at home. I am a yoga convert. If you are a yoga doubter, stretch your limits, and give this a shot. You might just love it.
Saturday Night Preacher:
Wise Words from a Student and Pastor

As seminarians, we are learning many valuable skills that we will carry us through our vocation in the years to come. But nothing we have yet to learn so far has prepared us for Saturday nights. Why do we care about being prepared for Saturday nights? Because it’s the worst night of the week in the life of a pastor, in my opinion.

Let me tell you how my Saturday nights have gone for the past 5 years. 11:00pm rolls around. I need to be at the church around 8ish in the morning. I’m getting in bed…and then it starts. The Saturday night ritual of brain churning that even Tylenol PM cannot tame. So, here it is, late Saturday night. I’ve washed the dishes, locked the doors, turned off the TV and the lights, put the dogs to bed, put MYSELF to bed and here is what goes through my head...

The brass candlesticks on the altar really need to be polished…and the communion plates…and the altar cross. And when did they use green candles?

That big picture of Jesus at the back of the sanctuary is crooked. I should get a ladder out and fix that. I can only imagine how dusty that sucker is.

I need to get my robe hemmed. No more than an inch really. I just keep tripping on the damned thing every time I go up and down the steps. I swear somebody saw me almost trip last week and giggled during communion. I would TOTALLY do the same thing.

I don’t want to wear real shoes tomorrow. I believe I could actually pull off preaching in flip-flops. After all, Jesus wore sandals. Talk about your sensible preaching shoes. Good thing I’m not a girl…if I had to wear a robe AND heels, I would face plant every week without fail.

I wonder how many bruises priests and acolytes who swing incense end up with on a weekly basis. Is there a special incense swinging technique or class? That should really be a part of our seminary curriculum.

We should put some mums out in the flower beds and pots out front. Mums are pretty this time of year. Mums. Mummy. Is English or Australian for Mom. I don’t think I’ve talked to my mom in 3 weeks. Mummy. I would look funny as a mummy. A Funny Mummy.

I think I’ll wear my white stole tomorrow. The prescribed color for the season is green but the green stole I have looks like metallic booger. It’s hard to keep a straight face and act holy when you keep thinking about the big metallic booger hanging around your neck.

Boogers. Why did Jesus never talk about boogers? Did Jesus even have boogers?

I really hope they know all the hymns I picked out for tomorrow. Did I print enough bulletins?

Potluck dinner tomorrow night. Could go either way - here’s hoping we land on the yummy side and there’s only 5 different potato casseroles. I wonder if Jesus would have liked Coca Cola Slurpees.

My sermon is about 9 minutes long. If I talk slower - that’ll stretch out. Or I’ll add some fun words. Can I work in ‘platypus’? GOOD GRIEF I’d really like to go to sleep now.

What’s my sermon about again? Sermon, sermon, sermon…I should memorize it. What if I did a whole sermon as a mime?

Don’t forget to turn off the PA system after church tomorrow.

White alb or black robe? Hmmm….last time I wore the white someone asked me where the matching hood was.

I’m using an Erma Bombeck quote in my sermon tomorrow. She’s the bomb….beck. Ha!

GO TO SLEEP.

I think I’ll cut that paragraph about Peter out of my sermon…it doesn’t really connect to anything else. Who really cares if scholars think Peter was a rather muscular, burly disciple? Well, wait, maybe there’s a joke there…he’s like the Hulk Hogan of disciples.

Do any of my youth group even know who Hulk Hogan is? I bet people would give more if Hulk Hogan preached on stewardship. Heck, he could just pass the plates and stare. That would be enough to intimidate people into giving more.

GO TO SLEEP. You have to get up early and be perky and love people.

And that’s what Saturday night as a pastor is like. Consider yourself warned.
“Find people you can truly relate to, and make sure you stay in contact FOREVER. Ministry is as lonely as you make it, and if you don’t reach out to those you spent intense, quality times with then you can become isolated and lonely quickly.”
- Steven Akins, APTS Class of 2007

“I wish I would have learned...how use big data to serve the ministry. My analytical skills are pretty strong, but sifting through large amounts of data and knowing how to find real correlations would be a real asset.”
- Remington Johnson, APTS Class of 2012

“Start networking and making relational connections as soon as you set foot on campus - and not just in the seminary bubble. Go to conferences, denominational youth retreats, meet local clergy, sit in on community organizations, or volunteer at a church or outreach programs. The wider your networking the more you learn, the deeper your conversations, and eventually, the more references and placement "scouts" you might have.

You don’t have to read everything assigned. I repeat, you do not have to read everything assigned. Academic triage is the key to passing classes, holding down internships, being a part of your family, and doing things that allow you to recharge. However, take this advice with a grain of salt, I was a solid "B" student for a reason.

There is nothing underneath the Seminary chapel except dirt and wires and stuff. For a while I thought there might be some catacombs or Ted Wardlaw's tie vault down there. Nope. Just dirt. Don’t bother looking, you’ll just get filthy.”
- John Leedy, APTS Class of 2011

“I heard this from Craig Barnes in some sort of fashion and thought it was great advice. He compared the call to a marriage and said if you can handle the others’ faults then it will be a good call. The strengths are easy, but if you can embrace the others’ weaknesses then it will be a good fit.”
- Jonathan Warren, APTS Class of 2007

“I wish I had known how important self-care is to being a minister. Take time out of everyday to check in with yourself and nurture your fearfully and wonderfully made nugget of God.”
- Ryan Kemp-Pappan, APTS Class of 2008

“Befriend your organist or you’ll be up the creek without a paddle.

Trust is the essential collateral of ministry. Build it early and often.

Explore the landscape of American Christianity outside mainline circles, because it’s often the case that the people you encounter will be more familiar with Joel Osteen than Karl Barth.

Many churches are not yet on board with inclusive language. Be patient.

Sort out your own ideas about heaven. It’s on more people’s minds that you’d think.”
- Bart Smith, APTS Class of 2012

“Any woman who might even potentially have a baby *ever*, should have maternity leave spelled out in her terms of call.” - Siobhan Richards Warren, APTS Class of 2007

“The key component to being successful in ministry is that the building of relationships across generations, truly being present with someone your own age as well as a teen or an elderly person, far out weighs goals of what you want to accomplish in ministry. It’s all about relationship.”
- Laurel Dixon, APTS Class of 2011
Think about the best party you have ever been to in your life. Take a minute to remember. This could be your college graduation party or your wedding. Every single person in the room was warm and friendly and happy. Well, that’s what Marathon Monday is like in Boston. I know this because I grew up in Boston and although the rest of the world may focus on the Boston Marathon, we in “Mass” roll it into one huge holiday and it’s called Patriot’s Day. And Patriot’s Day, which includes Marathon Monday, is the fiercest party any state in America has ever thrown for itself. Ever.

Everything in the state shuts down to celebrate Patriot’s Day. It’s the end of six months of ice and snow and shoveling them both. Mud season is over and Fenway Park is open. The forsythia is just starting to burst forth in yellow. It’s been a long winter and we have cabin fever. We are ready to burst forth too.

But it’s not just a spring coming out party, we also celebrate the birthplace of the American Revolution. A celebrity in colonial garb will ride a horse, just like Paul Revere did, from Boston to Lexington where the first skirmish between colonial farmers and the British militia began. Revolutionary war cannons will be fired across town greens by modern “Minute Men” celebrating our collective independence from the Brits. Every town in Massachusetts has its own parade to honor the colonial heroes they lost in the Revolutionary War, and after that there’s the Boston Marathon. It’s like two parties in one day and they belong together.

Heading into Boston after your hometown parade, every bar will be open serving breakfast and beer. The city’s college fraternities roll out their B-B-Q grills and give away food. Everyone has a favorite spot along the route and we greet each other like long lost friends, so when your person runs by, they have the biggest cheering squad in the world. Runners pass pushing their handicapped children in strollers and there’s always “Johnnie,” a long, lean Irish guy in his 80’s, the oldest guy in the race. You cheer for the first woman runner and the race crasher in the BC sweatshirt who has had a few too many. We are all out there... the Harvard preppies, the Irish from Southie, the Italians from Arlington. We own this best day of all days, Patriot’s Day, and we love to share it with the rest of the world.

But not this past Monday. Just when the large purple-y bruises on our psyche, leftover from the Sandy Hook Elementary School debacle have started to heal, there is this bigger blast to absorb. There is an eight year old dead, an eight year old. He was probably holding his dad’s hand, waiting for his friend to cross the finish line, just like I did with my dad so long ago. I can’t believe it. I can’t believe it. I can’t believe it.

Whoever did this, God help them, did not just do this to the Boston Marathoners who are dead or injured, which is horrible enough. This is a blow to a cherished spring ritual for a people who absolutely need to celebrate the freedom of spring, and the history of that freedom which began with their colonial forbears. And it’s not just Boston that has to pick up the pieces. All the major roads leading out of this “Hub” city are spokes on a wheel and they send out vibes of rage and fear to our Yankee neighbors. For indeed, this is a dire blow to New England culture. Patriot’s Day with its Marathon Monday will never be the same. This is the party that everyone went to, and where everyone felt safe, because until April 15th, 2013, they were. How do you heal that?
The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been working hard to prepare future pastors to live well and within their means. One way they have been working toward this goal is by putting on seminars entitled “Getting in Shape Fiscally.” The information they provide includes valuable methods for persons of all denominations, including: making a budget, getting out of debt, planning for long term savings and retirement, and being a good steward of money. These are all things soon-to-be graduates should particularly be thinking about, but all of us need to hear.

The important first step they emphasize is to know what you are spending.

1. Begin by keeping an exact record of where your money goes. Record every purchase, charge, and check in a small notebook.
2. After three months, categorize all expenditures into different categories (for example: food, clothing, restaurant, impulse spending, car expenses, entertainment, etc.)
3. Decide what can be changed or delayed in your spending patterns so that you can free up cash for more important expenditures.
4. Try to cut out excessive or unnecessary purchases.
5. Stop credit card charges!
6. Cut back and defer buying until you feel more in control of your spending.

One of the most common areas of overspending is eating out. Consider that most food and drink is marked up at least 100% over cost. Added to the cost of tipping, the restaurant overhead greatly adds to food expenses. Consider suggesting to friends that you cook dinner together. Not only do you save money, you also spend quality time together in a quieter environment more conducive to conversation!

A helpful budgeting resource is a book written by Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Warren Tyagi entitled All Your Worth: The Ultimate Lifetime Money Plan. These authors suggest laying out a budget according to their “Balance Money Formula” which breaks income, after taxes are taken out, into three broad budget categories—Must-Haves, Wants, and Savings. Fifty percent (50%) of after-tax income should be designated for Must-Haves, such as rent, transportation, insurance, utilities, food (just necessary groceries), loans, contractual obligations, childcare, medical care, phone services, etc. Thirty percent (30%) of after-tax income should be designated for wants: cable, internet, eating out, entertainment, hobbies, clothes, presents, allowances for each adult, vacations, postage, hair care, etc. The final twenty percent (20%) is designated for savings, from which 10% should go into emergency savings and 10% should go into retirement savings. This final 20% is negotiable if you are trying to pay off student loans, car payments, credit card debt, etc. For instance, you may wish to designate 10% for paying off debt and 10% for emergency savings.

Changing your spending habits and starting a budget is particularly important if you see any of the following danger signals:

1. No consistent management of your money
2. Spending all you earn
3. No emergency savings plan
4. Too many credit cards (this number depends on the person/family)
5. Unpaid balances for 60 days or more
6. Impulse buying of big ticket items that have to be financed
7. Checking account overdrafts

The “Getting in Shape Fiscally” seminar is put on every year, especially for graduating Presbyterian seniors, but is available to everyone because learning about money and being a good steward of money is a necessity for everyone!
Contributing to Kairos:

1. Kairos is the voice of the community at Austin Seminary.

2. Kairos generally carries no advertisements for sale of goods or services by individuals. An exception is the sale of a student or professor’s library or other study aids.

3. It is not possible to make all program announcements which are submitted by individual churches. Kairos is more likely to run announcements which apply to ecumenical or interfaith groups or groups of churches.

4. No letters which attack individuals or groups will be run in Kairos. This is to be distinguished from letters which might criticize the actions of individuals or groups.

5. Please note that ALL contributions are expected to be 300-500 words unless otherwise noted. Longer submissions may be excluded in final editing due to limitations of space.

6. Please also note that Kairos seeks to uphold the APTS policy on inclusive language. All contributors are strongly encouraged to use expansive and inclusive language and may be asked to edit their pieces to reflect this policy.

7. Kairos will publish letters to the editor that contribute to Christian conversation on the APTS campus. All letters must be signed.

8. Email submissions to the editor, Layton Williams, at layton.williams@student.austinseminary.edu. Editorial decisions are based on urgency, availability of space and editorial guidelines. Deadline is Wednesday at 5:00 pm. Submissions made after the deadline must be accompanied by a bribe.