

CEDARS

Cedarville University Student Magazine

Fall 2022



Adoptees

From around the globe

Ukrainian Students Share Their Stories

God shows his faithfulness in the midst of war

The Story of Chris Cross

Cedarville's new athletic director

Game Changer

Storytelling in gaming

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On next steps

By *Heidie Raine*

I'm currently sitting in the Dayton airport, gate B19, three granola bars into a flight delay. The plane that came from Philadelphia has a bad nose, so while it gets rhinoplasty, we're waiting for another jet from D.C. Then to Chicago we'll go — a jamboree of travelers depleted of phone batteries but rich in free airline snacks.

Chicago is a 90-minute drive from my mother's house. It's close enough that I can convince my dad to pick me up tonight, but it's far enough that my mother has requested I take the bus shuttle back to the airport come Monday.

Still, something about circling Lake Michigan to land and breathe in Chicago's air (it smells distinctly of urine) makes me feel warm. I know what that place looks like. It's my state. It's where I learned to ride a bike, had my first kiss, went to high school, returned to every holiday.

But tonight, I'm not flying to Illinois for a holiday. I'm flying back because I miss my mom; I miss my church; I haven't been home in five months; I need to begin my wedding dress fittings; the race track that my stepdad loves is hosting its annual Wheel Stand, and I want nothing more than to sit in a folding chair and watch funny cars crank by in the company of sunburnt men with ponytails.

These are the treasures I surrendered when I moved out last August. In exchange for my hometown's specialties, I received the gentle kick of growing up. My address changed. It's a whispering reminder that while I'm always welcome in my mother's home, I'm a visitor there.

Why am I so reflective in this sticky, rural airport? I can't say. Maybe going home makes my Ohio residency feel more distant, more severe. Maybe I don't know how to inhabit my childhood space with my grown-woman life. Maybe I feel like I'm cheating — like missing home means I can't handle the rigor of marriage, graduation, the next steps. Maybe I'm realizing that I haven't seen my parents in nearly half a year, and I wonder if I'll see age in their faces that I hadn't before.

Planning a wedding accelerated the feeling. I registered for sugar canisters and throw blankets that look nothing like my mother's. Last week, my fiancé and I bought a couch — a new one that we'll take with us when we move. I'm filling my apartment with things too big for my Illinois bedroom closet, but it's appropriate. I've started thinking about what it would be like to invite my parents over for a housewarming party.

That's weird. It's weird to hold ambition and homesickness in proper tension.

But even among my single friends, there's a shared impression that it's time to dive out of the nest. What

does the recent graduate with no car, debt, and summer-camp work experience do?

Their best. They find cheap rent and thrifty housemates and hunker down until the right job interview and wave of confidence comes rushing through. Then slowly, with oceanic patience and God's grace, they sneak into adulthood. The exact mechanics of that maneuver remain an ancient secret that most people figure out by 27.

I suppose these are the meditations of a 21-year-old soon-to-be graduate, soon-to-be a wife, soon-to-be scholar-in-training, but not-yet any of those things. And as everything in my life whizzes around, there's something serene about catching the late flight home to my childhood bedroom where I can wrap myself in the sheets that knew me at 14.

This weekend, I will amble through familiar trails and sit in familiar coffee shops and catch my breath. I'll cheer on funny cars at the race track whose tar stench used to make me nauseous but now beckons to me.

When I come home to Ohio on Monday, I'll resume the laundry and homework that I put on pause. But hopefully refreshed — hopefully with a dose of some peculiar, nostalgic adrenaline to remind me that before a foundation can be laid, the builder must shuffle through many plots of bumpy, untested ground.



Heidie Raine

Heidie Raine is a senior English major with a concentration in creative and journalistic writing. When she isn't doing lit theory homework, she likes drinking La Croix and reading Brian Doyle

Change in comedy

How streaming has impacted a genre

By Ella Smith



We all laugh.

From the beginning of creation, laughter has been a gift from God. Likewise, the comedy genre is not a new idea. It has been around since as early as the fifth century in Ancient Greek plays. Many things about comedy haven't changed. Comedy still has the main goal of making people laugh, entertaining people, often showing the absurdities in life and offering a helpful takeaway for the audience.

However, with the growing popularity of streaming and the shift in how society consumes media, comedy isn't viewed or experienced in the same way it used to be. We no longer go to the theaters for every new movie we watch. We don't go to comedy clubs to see new comedians. Society is not the same as it was a few years ago. A good question to ask ourselves is whether comedy has changed with it or been left behind.

There are many different formats used to portray comedy. Two of the most prevalent are movies and stand-up. They make up the majority of the ways comedy is expressed and are the most commonly viewed mediums of comedy.

Comedy movies experienced a shift over the last few years in how they are both viewed and made. In the late 2000s, comedy movies were prevalent and had frequent success as blockbusters. Since then the genre has experienced several failures. In 2010, there were 21 comedy movies in the top 100 highest-grossing films. In 2015 there were 18. That number went down to 15 in 2020 and dropped to 8 in 2021. This steady decline points to a lack of interest in comedy movies. It's not that there are fewer comedy movies but there are certainly fewer comedy movies that are doing well in theaters.

There could be a few reasons for this. One reason could be studios leaning more toward actor-based

comedies rather than script-based comedies. This leads to comedies often lacking a solid plot and new writing. These actor-based comedies are not always bad but have grown stagnant.

Another reason is the popularity of streaming services. Streaming services have changed every genre of television and movies but especially comedies. Comedy movies have always been a riskier genre because it is subjective and requires a good balance of elements to create a successful movie. This has only been heightened by fans growing more vocal about negative opinions. Now that streaming services have taken over so much media production, it no longer feels necessary for them to take that risk.

"Streaming is keeping comedy alive, but that doesn't mean it always works," said Sean O'Connor, assistant professor of Broadcasting, Digital Media, and Journalism at Cedarville University.

There is a lot more content on streaming services, but many of them fail to make an impression or create something unique. Many are just rehashes of familiar concepts with no new twist added to them. Every few movies you will find a good unique one but it's hard to distinguish what will be good and what will be unimpressive.

The growth of online platforms influence stand-up comedy. And changes in stand-up have had positive effects on the industry.

In the past, stand-up comedians had to be a famous actor before becoming a comedian. Otherwise, they would have to slog tirelessly in small venues for little to no pay until they had built up enough popularity

Now, with so many ways to view content, it is easier for comedians to build a platform on YouTube or social media in a more risk-free environment. This enables them to

already have an audience before performing shows or touring. Comedians who have an established audience are also able to use streaming platforms. Many streaming services are adding comedy series from famous comedians. Netflix alone released 54 stand-up comedy specials this year. This can bolster a comedian's popularity and allow them to reach an audience they might not have reached from in-person shows.

On the other hand, there could be some downsides to the popularity of online platform building. With more content online, it is easier for people to watch clips of people and determine whether they are funny or not before they go see them in person. This means comedians must have content that is funny enough to entice their audience to go out of their way to watch them.

As far as the actual content of stand-up comedy, not too much has changed in the structure and format of comedy. It still is a highly subjective genre and largely dependent on the audience.

Comedy in all its mediums is nothing new, nor will it cease to exist anytime soon. However, it has changed in how it is produced and consumed and will continue to do so. It is less important in what form comedy appears but rather that it fulfills a purpose, to entertain, amuse, serve as a destresser, or point out a dissonance in society.

Payton Burdette, the president of LOL, the Cedarville comedy organization also works at Funny Bone, a comedy club in Dayton.

"The genre of comedy is timeless," he said. "How people consume that content will change."

Ella Smith is a freshmen professional writing and informational design student as well as a writer for Cedars. She enjoys a stack of good books, a warm cup of tea (with a fair bit of honey,) and cuddling with her dogs.

The life of Brenda Reid

Genealogies brought Brenda Reid closer to her family and their history of faith

By Marielle Payton

Brenda Reid is the director of International Student Services and well-beloved by international, missionary kids and “third culture kid” students. She manages and oversees “everything international students.”

But she also has a secret specialty that takes her across borders. Reid has an avid interest in history and has been doing personal genealogy research for over 15 years.

Through her research, she uncovered an inspiring story of faithfulness. From fleeing religious persecution to planting churches for marginalized communities, her family has a fascinating history of ministry and service.

Reid always enjoyed learning about history. She majored in history during her time as a Cedarville student from 1984 to 1988. However, it was through conversations with her parents and extended family that her curiosity really began to grow about her own history.

“Tell me about your grandparents,” she asked.

Her mom knew a little bit about her side of the family tree, but her dad didn’t know much at all. It was after he died that Reid began to dig into some of those questions.

Reid’s father grew up humbly, spending his summers in the South, barefoot and picking bugs off of tobacco plants.

Her mother’s side, however, has a legendary history. Most notably, she remembers hearing about a grandfather who died at Andersonville prison in Georgia. But through research, she discovered it wasn’t her grandfather, it was his brother – her great-uncle. It turns out that her grandfather did die but it was during the Civil War – killed during a battle.

A lot of her research throughout the years has been done slowly by carefully sifting through records at online genealogical sites. The service Reid uses is FamilySearch, a popular free genealogical record website

that includes both United States and international records. She’s also made use of Ancestry.com. She loves cross-referencing and researching on both websites.

“My siblings always enjoy hearing the tidbits, but they haven’t pursued it as I have,” Reid said. “I’m definitely the family historian.”

She discovered a lot of fun facts while working on this project. Her family is related to the Breyers of Breyer’s Ice Cream, as well as possibly related to the Heinz of Heinz’s Sauces and Condiments. She hasn’t been able to completely verify the latter due to a lack of sufficient records, but she has a fond memory of attending a Heinz family reunion and coming away with a lot of cool souvenirs, including a pickle pin and T-shirt.

However, following the thread of faith and service in her family is what she’s really passionate about. One example is the story of her third great-grandfather, Elial Joslin. Joslin was an oyster fisherman from New Jersey and a faithful member of the local assembly, Dividing Creek Baptist Church. One day, however, it was discovered that he’d been fishing on Sunday and the church promptly kicked him out for violating the Lord’s Day. Reasonably, Joslin was upset and didn’t go back to the church for several years. But eventually, he decided to apologize and the church happily welcomed him back into fellowship.

Joslin’s family didn’t stay long at the church after making amends. Instead, that experience became the catalyst for their family leaving and starting a church for sailors and seamen. He and his family founded Mariner’s Bethel Church, a floating seaman’s missionary church in Philadelphia, a place where all who “fished their ware” for a living were welcome.

“The one thing for me that’s been really neat to see is the history of believers in my family, generations back,” Reid said.



Brenda Reid

Reid particularly loves looking at census records and seeing what people did for a living. A lot of her dad’s ancestors were textile workers. They jumped back and forth between North Carolina and Virginia, looking for work. One ancestor who was kicked out of Scotland due to being on the wrong side of the Jacobite rebellion became a silversmith in Williamsburg. He went from living in a castle to living in a brick house and working for a living.

“When you stand in the ruins of a castle that was built in the year 800, all of a sudden you start to realize how much more history there is that you don’t know, and how many people came behind you to build the life and the experiences that you have now,” Reid said. “That’s really humbling. The guy who was kicked out of Scotland, started an entirely new legacy for his family, living honestly and working hard and not depending on status or name. It’s been neat to see those kinds of stories unfold.”

Not everyone in Reid’s family has been a believer. She’s found some grievous stories as well, about choices ancestors have made and causes they’ve supported that go against everything she believes. But it also makes her grateful for redemption and grace, and thankful that their mistakes haven’t carried forward. Learning about the history of believers in her family has inspired her. It’s given her a greater



Brenda Reid standing on the ruins of her ancestor's castle in Ireland.

appreciation for scriptures that talk about the generations serving the Lord and how it really does make an impact.

"I don't think these people necessarily thought three, four, five generations ahead what their life choices and faith choices would impact future people," Reid said. "And we often don't. We think of the first generation that's visibly in front of us but not six, eight generations beyond."

Reid loves looking at her history and seeing the faithfulness of God through the generations. It influences her to be more mindful of how she lives and what legacy she will leave for those who come after her.

She enjoyed having a few conversations with international students about their genealogy as well. She loves hearing about their family history and heritage, and it's amazing to see how God works through people through generations and locations.

Ultimately, all of her ancestors were immigrants at some point. When she

reflects on the courage that it took for them to leave their country, it gives her a greater appreciation for the struggles international students face. Doing genealogical research and finding all these other countries and nationalities in her background has helped her connect with students and realize there is so much more to her than her American heritage.

One of the items on Reid's bucket list is to tour all the places in her family ancestry, both in the United States and abroad. She visited Ireland

when her daughter was there doing the Study Abroad Program. While there, she visited the ruins of a castle and only found out when back in the U.S. that the exact castle had been the dowry for her 25th great-grandmother's wedding.

Now, she always makes sure to check addresses in census records and look them up – maybe some of them still exist.

MP is a sophomore. She has a passion for genealogical research, as well as all things vintage and history-related.



Title IX celebrates its 50th anniversary

Gender equality came to athletics in 1972

by Chris Karenbauer

Teresa Clark, Cedarville University's Faculty Athletic Representative, was a student athlete when Title IX was implemented 50 years ago. She played volleyball as a student, and then she returned to Cedarville as the head coach for the volleyball team.

Title IX of the Education Amendments was adopted in 1972 to end sex discrimination. According to the Department of Education, Title IX "protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance."

As other colleges and universities remodeled their athletic programs to accommodate women in their athletic programs, Cedarville University – called Cedarville College at the time – did not need to change much. It was already allowing women to participate in academics and athletics.

"As a student athlete during that time, I never felt like what we were doing didn't matter," Clark said. "I always felt respected, and we had gym time; we were able to compete; we had our own schedule; we had transportation; we had uniforms. And so, we were respected on this campus."

Cedarville provided equal opportunities for men and women well before 1972. But what were colleges and universities like before Title IX?

Cedarville's Title IX coordinator Shannon Berkheiser said that, in academics, women were excluded from majors that were not considered "lady-like" or were seen as male-



Lisi Williamson is a forward on Cedarville's women's soccer team.

only, which included engineering and business. In athletics, sports were mostly for men, aside from what most people considered "feminine" like cheerleading.

Since the implementation of Title IX, women have been given the option to participate in athletics alongside their male counterparts. Berkheiser pulled numbers from the Women's Sports Foundation. In the 1971-1972 school year before Title IX was implemented, under 30,000 women participated in college athletics. Comparatively, about 170,000 men played some kind of sport. Since the 2020-2021 school year, about 215,000 women play sports.

Before Title IX, most schools did not allow for women to play in sports or discouraged them from participating. But Cedarville University was different.

"At Cedarville, we were ahead of the curve in terms of Title IX," said Chris Cross, the athletic director at Cedarville University. "We had field

hockey, volleyball and cheerleading prior to 1972. Soon after 1972, in 1973, we started women's basketball. So, we were providing opportunities at Cedarville well before Title IX was enacted."

Clark attributes Cedarville's commitment to the Bible for this forward thinking.

"We look at the Word of God, and it tells us, 'Respect everyone'," she said. "God has created everyone, and we are to embrace that."

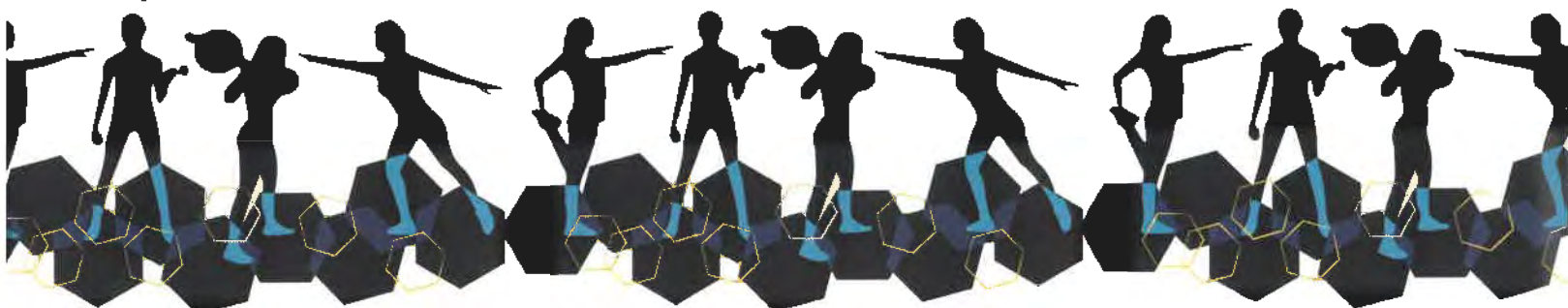
Since Title IX was implemented, Cedarville has expanded its women's athletic programs by adding soccer, softball, cross country and track.

Lisi Williamson, a junior soccer player, said, "I think, generally, I do not believe my experience has been tainted by sexism. However, coming in my freshman year, there was one situation that was completely unfair, and just got resolved this year."

During her sophomore year, the athletic department was supposed to construct a women's locker room for the soccer players, which was part of Cedarville's 10-year plan. However, only the men's soccer locker room got renovated.

"Fortunately, we had one representative that was just about as livid as we were and fought for us to at least get a new space," Williamson said. "It took two years, but finally this year we were in our own space. It's not as pretty or spacious like the men's locker rooms, but it is our own space."

Despite some struggles, Cedarville does a good job allowing women to participate in athletics, and with





Cedarville had a volleyball team before Title IX became law. / Photo by Logan Howard

Title IX, all colleges and universities under the National Collegiate Athletic Association are required to do the same.

According to the NCAA, Title IX requires institutions to give men and women equal opportunities in the athletic programs. This does not mean that sport needs to offer a men's and women's team. They only need to offer an equal opportunity to play.

The NCAA also requires all institutions to treat male and female athletes equally, including providing scholarships proportional to the male to female ratio who attend the institution. Other benefits include gym equipment and supplies, equal schedule and practice times, travel allowances and stipends for each team, among other things.

Even now, the NCAA faces discrepancies with male and female athletics. For example, the media covers NCAA's men's March Madness far more than they cover women's basketball. Is it the NCAA's fault?

According to Cross, March Madness generates most of the NCAA's funding for the year. Sponsors and advertisers focus on men's basketball, but they do not focus on women's basketball as

much. Whether it's right or wrong, money speaks volumes in athletics.

"At times, there might be an element of discrimination that has led to those things," Berkheiser said. "But often, there is a bigger picture, and a large part of that is money. More people are willing to pay more money to go to a men's basketball game on average than to a women's basketball game. They are more likely to bet on the men's games than the women's games. So, those are bigger issues than just the NCAA and much bigger than just an institution."

Every year, Cedarville reassesses its athletic finances to give equal opportunity to both men and women. Last year, the school population of women to men was 54-46. This year,

the gap decreased to 52-48 women to men.

"That gap became narrower, more skewed to the male side," Cross said. "But we have traditionally given more financial aid to our women's sports than we have to our male sports by a good margin."

Berkheiser believes that athletics begin with children and high school students. They feed colleges and universities with athletes, so education on gender discrimination needs begins with the younger demographics.

"Engage with parents," Berkheiser said. "Talk about their desires and what they are wanting. Engage with people who have a position of influence, who can help support their ideas and move them along."

Everyone, whether man or woman, deserves an equal opportunity to become great sports players. Title IX gives that opportunity to allow women to achieve their dreams in athletics and academics.

"Providing opportunities for our young women is important," Cross said. "Athletics provides a whole host of positive experiences that young ladies should be taking advantage of, and we should be providing."

Chris Karenbauer is a senior Journalism major and the Editor-in-Chief for Cedars. She enjoys reading and writing, hanging out with friends and listening to music.



Teresa Clark has been an athlete and coach at Cedarville. / provided by Teresa Clark **CEDARS**



The power of animation

A powerful genre not appreciated

By Janie Walenda



It's a tale as old as time. Another animated kids' film is released, with enough adult humor to make it tolerable for the parents. Animated musicals like "Frozen" or "Encanto" are famous for being watched by kids to the point of annoyance for parents.

Is animation just inherently childish? Or do children's stories just have more fantastical elements, therefore making animation the ideal medium?

Is animation defined as being a child-friendly genre, or is it far more versatile?

Professor Jeffrey Simon, who teaches multiple animation classes at Cedarville, believes there are many reasons why children's content may work better in animation.

"Animation can be better suited to children's media because of moving holds and exaggeration," Simon said.

A moving hold is a slight bit of motion that a character needs to have while in a pose. For example, even while holding still, a character will still be breathing.

While this may take more work in the animated format versus the live-

action format, animation makes it much easier to manipulate a moving hold for a dramatic or comedic effect. A moving hold is a great example of how animation can push and exaggerate within its style, far beyond what live-action films can do. This exaggeration oftentimes leads to animated films being bigger, brighter and louder, and therefore more appealing to children.

Of course, it's untrue to pretend that animated films are only made for children. Adult-targeted animation has existed for decades. However, it feels like there is no middle ground between the edgy, explicit animated content like "Family Guy" and "South Park" and the G-rated, kiddish family animation.

Within recent years, however, there has been a rise in animated projects that are clearly not marketed toward kids but also aren't going out of their way to be inappropriate. An early example of this is the 2009 film "9." Set in a post-apocalyptic world, the film is certainly dark and not meant for kids but not explicit in content.

Just within the past year, projects like "Arcane" and "The House" have emerged that, while still having mature content, are not defined by how inappropriate and edgy they are.

It's impossible to talk about animation, especially adult-focused animation, without talking about anime. For decades, anime has not specifically catered to family audiences. Even outside of the obvious, action-based anime, even slice-of-life animes tend to appeal more to an adult audience, rather than being kid-friendly. Anime could be the subject of its own article, but it shows that perhaps this idea of animation being a children's genre is a specifically Western concept.

Even while the majority of animated projects have been made for children, there have always been those who saw its potential as a visual medium. The best films and television shows, whether animated or live-action, have deeply considered the best medium to tell their story.

Animation can be a huge asset to the storytelling process. Sean

O'Connor, assistant professor of Broadcasting, Digital Media and Journalism said, "Film and TV is visual storytelling. With animation, you go so much beyond what we can actually see."

Simon expressed a similar sentiment, saying, "Animation displays things that just can't be told with real-life actors. It can display truths and ideology, and connects with audience in a way live action movies can't."

Not only can animation push past the boundaries of live-action films visually, but the heightened reality of an animated world can also often be the perfect background against which to reflect important truths about values and the world around us.

However, while in the right context an animated film can create a deeper connection with its audience, all animated films have an uphill battle to establish these connections.

When we see real people on the screen it is much easier to immediately associate ourselves with them and to feel that their story is real, whereas with animated characters it is easier to feel detached. However, with the overuse of CGI in live-action media - when done poorly can be a huge distraction in a film - it is possible that animated movies, with one cohesive style, may feel more cohesive.

What decides if a story should be animated? As film franchises like "Lord of the Rings," "Star Wars" and the Marvel Cinematic Universe prove, fantastical elements in a film don't automatically mean it must be animated.

O'Connor said, "Knowing what characteristics of your film will lend themselves to animation" is the key to making this decision.

All the franchises listed above have characteristics that would lend themselves well to animation. All these franchises have made animated projects at one point or another, but they also have characteristics that work better in live action.

Ultimately, it will all come down to storytelling. Simon gave several examples of potential questions to decide which medium to choose:

- What do I need to show visually in the storytelling?

- Which style will fit better?

- What is the source material coming from?

- Do the antics and exaggeration need to push beyond reality?

Superhero stories are a complicated case study. Obviously, the source material - comic books - lends itself easiest to animation. While there were successful early live-action comic book adaptations, the superhero genre in the 90s was



dominated by the iconic animated Batman, X-Men and Spider-Man shows. It wasn't until the release of "Spider-Man" and "X-Men" in the early 2000s that superhero stories started to work in live-action.

While comic books can be most accurately adapted in animation, live-action comic book movies work well because of the realism factor. The moral of many superhero stories is to inspire positive change and action in their audience, something made easier with a live-action actor on the screen. For this reason, superhero stories can work well in both mediums.

Neither animation nor live-action is better than the other. Both mediums have their storytelling strengths and weaknesses, and both can be visually stunning. A savvy filmmaker will know which medium will best serve the story they are striving to tell. And while animation is often the best choice for a child's film, it can do so much more.

Both O'Connor and Simon had ideas about what they would like to see more of in animation going forward. O'Connor misses the days when Pixar had something to say and feels that they've been too on the nose recently. Simon misses the hand-drawn animation style and wants to see more films like "Into the Spideverse" and "Mitchells vs. the Machines." Films that use animation's strengths to the fullest.

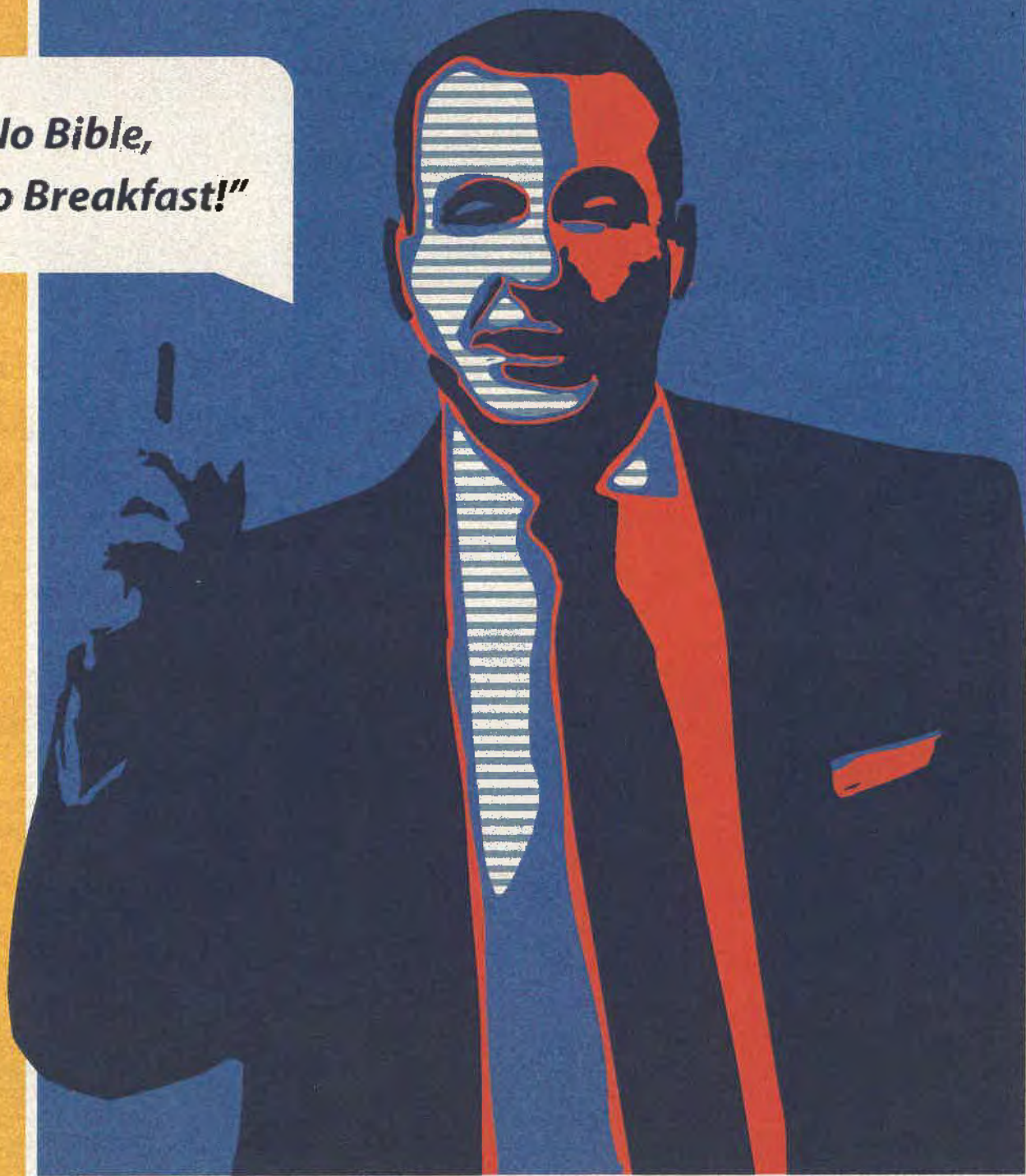
I want to see a larger variety of genres within animation. I want to see romantic comedies, dramas, sci-fi, fantasy, all of it. I want to see animation embraced not as its own, limiting genre, but as the powerful visual medium that it is.

Janie Walenda is a sophomore Global Business major and the A&E editor for Cedars. She is passionate about musicals, animation and cold brew.



10 YEARS

***"No Bible,
No Breakfast!"***



CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY

Dr. White celebrates 10 years serving Cedarville University

By Kathryn McDonald

"God is faithful. We can trust Him."

These words, spoken by Dr. Thomas White in many chapel messages to the student body of Cedarville University, resonate with his goal to see students leave Cedarville equipped with the tools they need to flourish. It starts with this foundational truth: God is faithful.

This academic year marks the 10th anniversary of White's service as President of Cedarville University. His time here has been filled with many opportunities to rejoice as he sees it expand and grow.

Of all the unexpected blessings in his life, White doubts that he could have anticipated the blessing of serving as president of a University. Looking back on the first steps he took in faith, White still isn't sure what he had expected before agreeing to take the role of president of Cedarville.

"I don't know that I knew what the joys of the position would be," White said. "I just knew that this was the next assignment from the Lord."

Even though the truth was not new for White, his confidence in it only grew as he continued working in faith. The other side of God's faithfulness that White points out is that even though we are unfaithful followers God is still faithful.

"I don't like when we try to pretend like we're not sinful," he said. "I like authenticity where we acknowledge with humility that all of us have issues and we seek to live better for Christ. Let's lock arms and walk through life together. And when we stumble, let's stumble forward, let's not fall backward. Let's keep stumbling forward so that we have a long walk in the same direction toward godliness."

White is confident that the faithful ministry that he gets to participate in at Cedarville will have a lasting impact on the lives of students in the many years to come. God blesses the

faithfulness of his servants even when the fruit comes long after they do the hard work of sowing and watering.

"How many Old Testament prophets had to serve faithfully and never got to see the fruits of their labor?" White asked.

The greatest joys White has in his ministry to students are when he sees them take God's faithfulness to heart as they faithfully serve the Lord with their lives. Seeing students' lives change even beyond their 1,000 days is one of his happiest processes to witness. White said he thinks the soul-changing impact Cedarville has will continue to be revealed as time unfolds. White's goal for students is to see them equipped in their 1,000 days to grow into the kinds of people who do kingdom work with enthusiasm for the rest of their lives beyond Cedarville.

Dr. Jon Wood serves as vice president for Student Life and Christian Ministries and assistant professor of Theological Studies and has been working with White for the past 18 years. As the years passed, Wood saw White's ministry impact the lives of others in ways that are hard to quantify.

"Perhaps one of the most significant things Dr. White does is cultivate, equip and motivate the people that students interact with so regularly," Wood said. "His influence works from behind the scenes. He really seeks to equip the rest of us to be effective."

White's experience with teachers in his own life has taught him that faculty members can make huge differences in students' lives. So he makes it a clear priority of Cedarville to hire faculty who are willing to spend their time personally investing in students.

Not only is it important for Cedarville to hire faculty who will lead the students well, but White also has a responsibility to be an example of leadership to faculty and staff. Having

worked with Dr. White for almost two decades, Wood points to Joshua 1:6-9 as a passage that characterizes his leadership.

"The foundation for being strong and courageous is the word of God," Wood said. "He seeks to build upon the foundation of the word of God which then allows, equips, and empowers him to be strong and courageous as a leader of the university. I don't think our community can fully grasp how much pressure and how intense the university president role is, I think the way he approaches those trials is to trust God first and foremost. The pressure and the stress drive him to dependence on God."

White recalls how faithful God has been to him and the university in the midst of challenging times.

"Everything we've needed all along the way, the Lord has just provided," White said. "In the nick of time, He comes through with what we need."

While this is certainly true of God's provision for Cedarville University over the years, White had his share of unmistakably divine moments of provision and answered prayer. One of the biggest moments in White's life was his interview for the position of president, and he recalls the encouragement that the Holy Spirit gave him that gave him the resolve to go through with it.

The day of the big interview arrived and White was having trouble focusing during his Bible time before heading to the interview. He had felt God's call to ministry at Cedarville but was wondering if this position was really the next step for him. As he sat on the hotel bed, White felt his phone vibrate on the table next to him. He was floored by what he read in a text message from his wife. It was Joshua 1:8-9.

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that

you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Later, when White asked his wife why she sent the text, she explained that she had wanted to send it the night before but felt like it wasn't the right time. The following morning, she felt like the Spirit was asking her to text him right then.

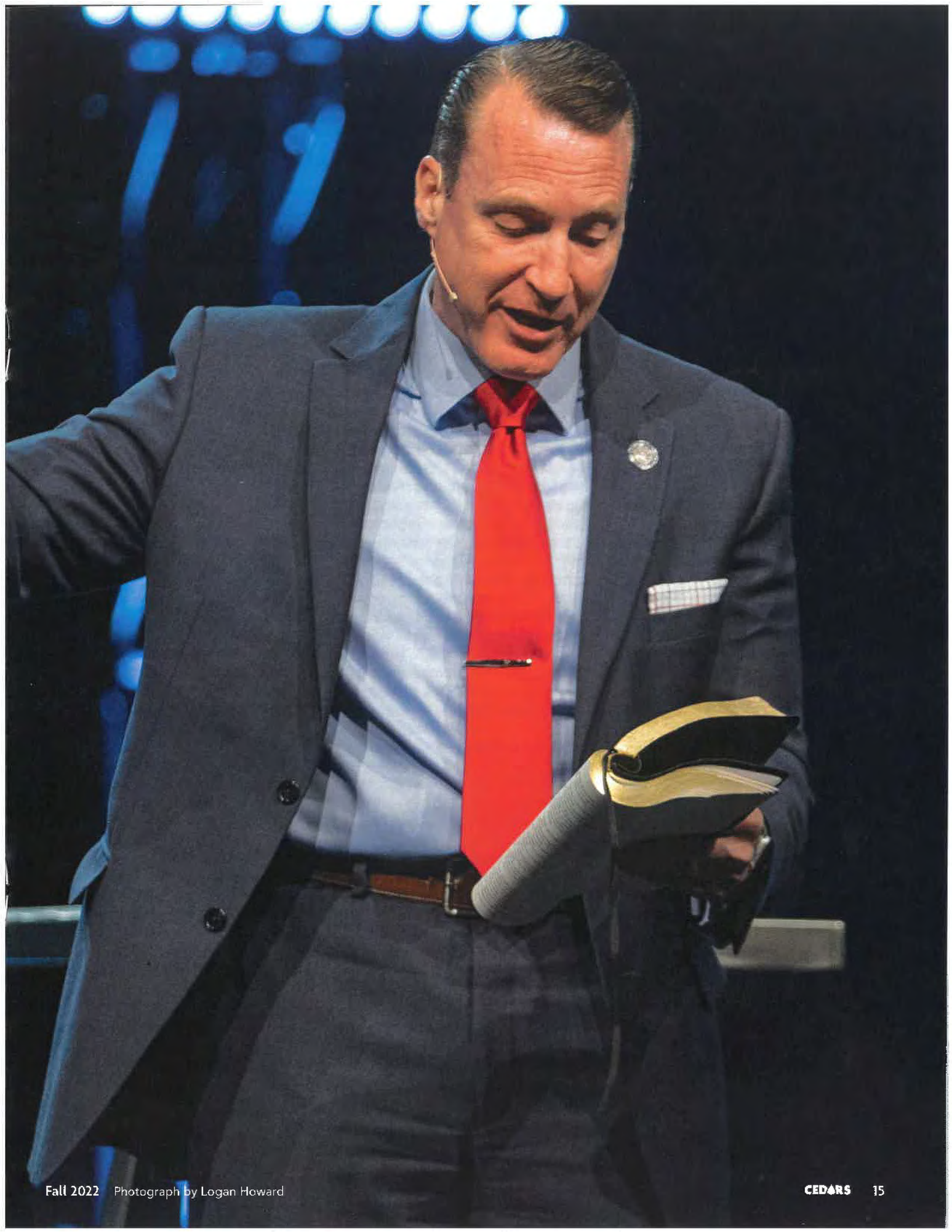
Fast forward to the preparations of White's inauguration ceremony. As speakers were asked to come and participate in this occasion, again God used this scripture to show White that this was the place he was needed. Dr. David Jeremiah even used this verse as a part of his message during the address given during White's inauguration.

"I feel like what's happened at Cedarville is just completely a result of all of the team of incredible men and women trying to be faithful to the Lord, strong and courageous, staying in the Word not departing from it, and the Lord's been faithful to bless," White said. "And He's not obligated to keep it going, but that's what He's done."

As Cedarville celebrates 10 years with Dr. White as university president, there is much to be thankful for. His goals for the university and heart for the individuals that God brings to Cedarville are special. His ultimate goal is to serve in ways that will lead to God working in students' lives so that they know the Love of God and experience the full blessing that he has for them.

Kathryn McDonald is a senior psychology major and writer for the Campus News section of Cedars. You can probably catch her writing a letter to a friend in the library or drinking coffee from her favorite mug.





Adoptees share perspectives on transracial adoption

By Maggie Walker

My surname, Walker, has Scottish origins, but I'm not Scottish. My current surname is not the only one I've held because I'm adopted. Before I was adopted, my surname was Yi, the surname given to me by the Chinese orphanage. I was adopted at 12 months and gained the surname Walker, my family's name.

How does growing up in a family with a different culture and ethnicity from me affect who I am now?

Adoptees who grew up in transracial families have wrestled with these questions and still wrestle with them today.

Below are the stories of adoptees at Cedarville University who shared their perspectives on growing up in transracial families and their journeys of thinking through their adoptions.

We were born in foreign countries and grew up in the United States, yet each story and journey is unique.



Maggie Walker

church on the topic of harbored unforgiveness. He was convicted and decided to pray about forgiving his birth mother. Though he didn't want to admit it, Geist had been wrestling with the question: "Why did you abandon me?"

"Even if I didn't want to admit, I had some animosity," he said. "I needed to confess and forgive my birth mother. Not that she had done anything wrong because she made the right choice."

"The Lord was gracious to forgive me of that and give her the forgiveness that Christ has given me."

But that doesn't mean Geist hasn't grappled internally with coming to terms with his own identity. It is fascinating, to be brought up in and understand a completely different culture and people group than the one you were born into.

It seems that by nature, adoptees subvert expectations and stereotypes. But that only happens when people are willing to see adoptees past their racial profile. A frustrating phenomenon in Geist's own experience is being racially generalized. When interacting with adoptees, Geist advises, "Just remember that everybody's different. Everybody's unique."

"Ask me where I'm from before you make a generalization and say, or assume, that I'm Chinese. Just because I'm adopted or look like someone who's from over there," Geist said. "Even if the numbers say that most adoptees come from China, that doesn't mean the one you're talking to is going to be from China."

Now, Geist is focusing on how his journey with adoption has been a reminder of God's faithfulness in his life.

"Is it moving on or moving forward?" Geist asked. "I would say it's moving forward. I acknowledge what has happened in the past, grasp

what I have learned from it, and move forward in life. I feel like moving on has a connotation of forgetting. And I think that, as an adoptee, I have to be careful not to forget. I don't want to forget because it's who I am. It's what God has used to make me who I am and who I will continue to be."



Senait Scheie and her brother were adopted from Ethiopia at 6 years old. When her birth family couldn't support them anymore, they moved to an orphanage and then a Christian children's home before being adopted.

While her family celebrated adoption, Scheie admits the journey of reconciling herself with her identity was hard. Through it all, her adoptive parents gave her the love and support she needed to get through the struggle and encouraged her to seek God through it all.

"I did struggle with my story a bit and how to reconcile everything, but I think that overall, through the ups and downs, my mom would tell me, 'This is your story, a clear testament of God's grace,'" Scheie said. "And that's how I met the Lord and gave my life to him. I knew my powerlessness at that point, how weak I was and how much God had to do."

Scheie's family was intentional about praying for her birth family as she grew up, and she learned some of the cultural traditions in Ethiopia. When she was older, her parents took the time to make her aware of the implications and baggage that came with her ethnicity, particularly about America's history of racism.

"At that point, I still didn't have a



Will Geist was adopted from Almaty, Kazakhstan, at 8 months, in October of 2001 — a month after 9/11. Family and friends urged Geist's parents not to go, but Geist's parents felt God's call, one beyond their sense of safety.

Geist has no memories of Kazakhstan, but his parents were open about his adoption. They told him his story when he was ready to hear it. Geist's birth mother couldn't support him and gave the adoption agency permission to place Geist in another family.

Soon after learning about his story, Geist heard a sermon at his

More adoptee stories can be found on Cedars website: Go to cedars.cedarville.edu

name for myself or a category for myself. Because although I looked African-American, I was Ethiopian — but I also didn't speak the language or have anything from the culture. And, although I was raised in a white family I didn't look like them," Scheie said. "I think learning about American history started to get me thinking about the question of 'Where do I fit in?' I don't have the same heritage as Black African-Americans here, and I grew up in a very different culture from them."

Scheie's parents were open about her adoption, and wanted them to ask questions they were wrestling with. While her parents were supportive and present, Scheie had to wrestle with her identity on her own.

One day, Scheie heard a sermon from a biracial speaker, who spoke about feeling like he didn't fit in with either side of his family. While the feeling of being "in-between" was isolating, the speaker saw this as a strength and opportunity to be a bridge between different types of people since he related to both groups. Scheie began thinking of her position similarly and realized that Jesus was in a similar situation while on earth.

"Christ was often the advocate between people groups that didn't want to get along and didn't want to fit into each other's cultures," Scheie said. "Instead of seeing it as a curse, He saw it as a blessing to be the one that gets to bring people together. I started viewing my position as an adoptee in that way."

Once she started thinking this way, Scheie found herself wanting to know more about her culture of origin. She dove into researching Ethiopia and found it was a helpful way to combat imposter syndrome. Before, Scheie felt uncomfortable when people asked her questions about Ethiopia. By learning about her birth country, Scheie felt like she had an understanding of the six years before her adoption.

Scheie recalled that people asked her whether she thinks about the fact that she's Black. Smiling, she answered, "No."

"Do you think that your eyes



From left to right: Jean Walker (Maggie's mom), Joseph Mattackal (Maggie's fiancé), Maggie Walker, David Walker (Maggie's Dad), and Maggie's siblings Holly, Lilly and Ben. / Photo provided by Maggie Walker.

are brown or green? No one goes around consciously thinking that," Scheie said. "I think the journey is getting to the balance of knowing your identity is founded in Christ — knowing that He's given you the way you look, the experiences you've had, the people you've met as good things — they're not a waste, they were meant for something."

Scheie wants everyone to know: "Ask good questions."

Instead of guessing about a family that has adopted children, give them the honor of telling you. Ask what their story is and if they don't mind sharing it. After asking an adoptee their story, be gentle in your response to them. Even a "thank you" means something to them because it is a big, and possibly painful, part of their life.

"Asking 'how are you doing now?' and 'how do you see God in this?' or 'how can I be praying for you?' is much better than saying well, 'that's so cool,'" Scheie said. "And maybe it is, maybe they agree with you, but sometimes it can be something personal and they're not healed through it yet."

To fellow adoptees, Scheie says, "Give yourself grace." Grief is something that can often be overlooked as an aspect of an adoptee's life. It is important to Scheie that adoptees recognize their grief and how they got past it as a part of their story.

"The reason we have adoption is that there was brokenness at some point. We grieve broken families,

broken leadership and government and countries that led to this. And thank goodness for God's grace that adoption is a thing, but your first step is grief," Scheie said. "I know that telling your story can get tiring. There are seasons when you're healing more from things. Don't be afraid to lean into all of that, there's no shame in that. It's just more strengthening in the end to yourself and your story."

To echo Scheie, telling one's adoption story is a brave and sometimes difficult thing to do. In the end, we are all just people made by God, each as complex as the next.

How significant were those months, years and so on these adoptees spent in their birth countries? How significant is it to our identities where the cultures and ethnicities we were born into are?

In reading these adoptee stories, perhaps the most accurate answer is that there are no blanket answers. Wrestling with these issues looks different for each adoptee.

But as Geist put it, "Being an adoptee is a part of us whether we like it or not. The truth transcends perception, and the truth is reality."

Maggie Walker is a senior political science major and hopes to attend law school after graduation. She enjoys exploring art museums and trying new foods, being part of the MISO officer team, working out, and listening to the same song until nauseous.



How interactivity is a game changer

Choose your own adventure

By Ben Konuch

Interactivity in media is an interesting enigma. It isn't anything new, with the popular "Choose Your Own Adventure" book series pioneering the concepts as early as 1979, but the last 10 years have shown a resurgence in the concept of interactive stories. Now reaching past its origin in books to encompass video games and even movies, the concept of interactivity is slowly shaping media with fascinating implications.

Interactivity has been shaping media in two main ways: indirect action and deliberate choice. Indirect action uses entertainment to give the player or viewer a sense of second-hand culpability that furthers the impact of the story. Video games, with the nature of their player-game dynamic, predominantly use this type of interactivity often to cause guilt or show shock at something the consumer wouldn't normally pay attention to.

For example, the 2012 action video game "Spec Ops: The Line" starts off fairly straightforward, with the player controlling a soldier exploring a post-disaster Dubai. But, as the game continues, the plot gets darker and the player is called to commit crueler acts. There's some element of deliberate choice interactivity, such

as whether or not the player executes enemies, but the overwhelming majority of the story unfolds with the player following the clear path set out for them with little regard to intentional choices or consequences. One loading screen tip even reads "The United States Army does not condone the killing of unarmed combatants. But this isn't real, so why should you care?" In this way, players start making small choices without even realizing choices are being presented to them.

The turning point of the game comes when the main character makes a decision without player input: to use white phosphorus to burn through an enemy fortification. After the attack subsides, the characters and the player are both shocked by the revelation that the fortification was actually a refugee camp.

The game uses the fact that players of action games typically remove morality from their decisions, acting in a way that "furthers the story" and promotes a false sense of heroism and nobility, despite the serious and often fatal consequences of actions. The way "The Line" uses this trope and medium to drive the point into the player is shocking, graphic and

upsetting. It hits hardest because of the way the player used and surrendered their control for the sake of the fictional story. This is a story that couldn't have the same effect on its players without its use of interactivity.

The second type of interactivity, the implementation of deliberate choice, isn't just bound to choice-based video games, like "Until Dawn" or "Telltale's Walking Dead." In 2018, Netflix experimented with its "Black Mirror" franchise with the release of "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch." "Bandersnatch" is a psychological thriller interactive film about a young programmer named Stefan trying to create a choice-based adventure game. The story focuses on Stefan trying to create his game about choice while ideas of free will and control are constantly presented to him.

As the deadline gets closer, Stefan realizes he's a slave to someone else's decisions and starts to fear that he has no control over his own actions. The watcher is forced to make Stefan choose increasingly difficult decisions that can not only drastically alter the plot, but determine his fate and sanity. So why, then, is the novelty of an interactive psychological thriller

movie such a selling point, especially with the story centering on free will and fate as it made its viewers face those exact dilemmas?

The reason goes back to the idea of choice and media, and even explains why "Spec Ops: The Line" had such an impact. Our Western society is fascinated with the ideas of moral responsibility and interactivity in media, whether that be the direct cause-and-effect type of media like "Bandersnatch" or the more subtle uses of choice and responsibility like "Spec Ops." Simply put, choice sells. The prospect of freedom, of being able to choose your own adventure, has been reinvigorated and multiple companies and media forms are realizing that.

This causes an interesting paradox of worldviews. As a society, our world has been moving away from the values of moral responsibility and has instead adopted a culture that points the finger at anyone but ourselves. In storytelling, you can see this as far back as Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," in which the monster only becomes corrupted after the actions and influence of others had affected it. As recently as 2019's "Joker," in which Arthur Fleck turns insane only through a society that treats him like trash. Even the mind-bending effect of "Bandersnatch" comes from the

revelation that the main character has no responsibility for what he does, as he discovers that he's bound to follow whatever the watcher chooses for him. If this is the way our culture works, why do people continue to consume media that advocates choice and responsibility?

Dr. Joshua Kira, a theology and philosophy professor at Cedarville University, explained that you have to look deeper into the situation to see that the appeal of these styles of stories comes from the fact that everything presented is virtual. Playing or watching interactive stories gives you the feeling of responsibility and accountability without having actual stakes.

"They're not actually selling you personal responsibility, they're selling you virtual responsibility," Kira said.

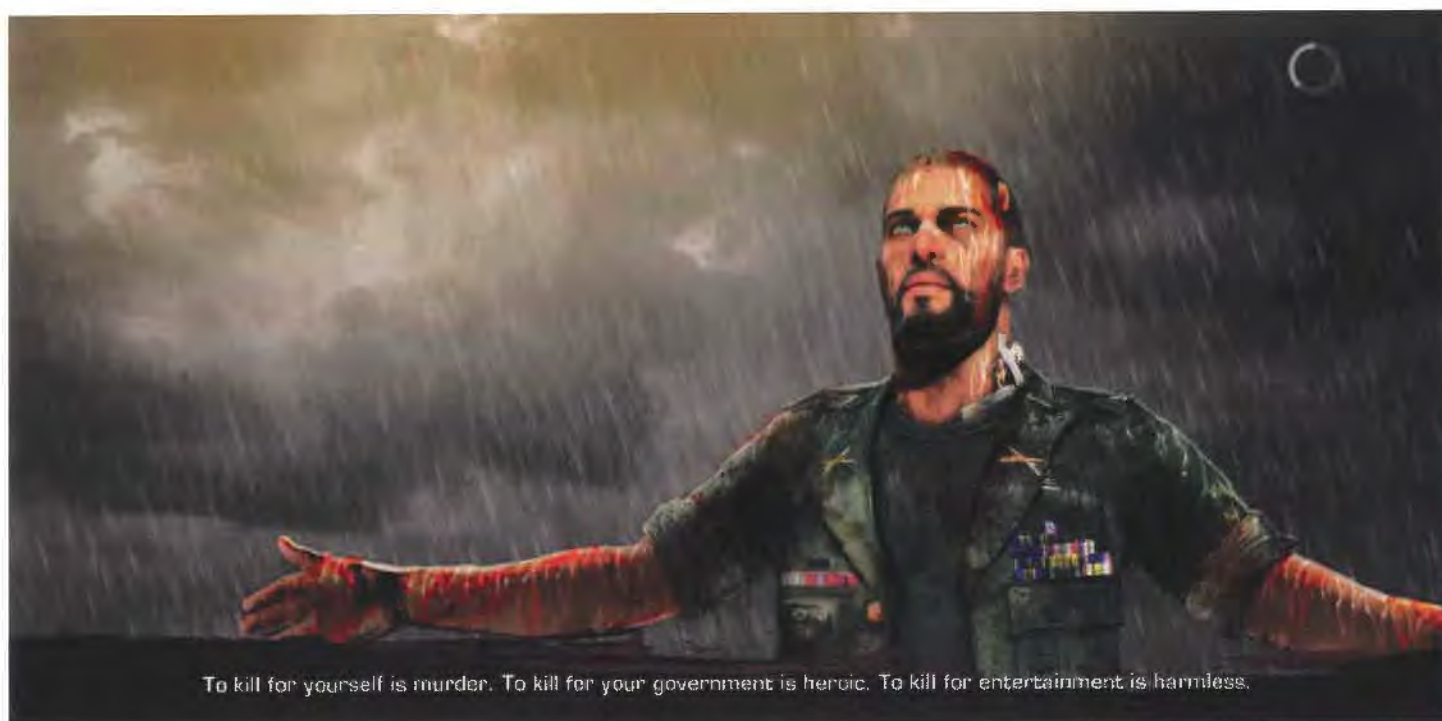
The paradox isn't actually a paradox at all because while our society is still moving away from personal responsibility, we want the feeling and the gratification of choices that pay off or the projected regret of a choice that doesn't actually come with the actual consequences. It's that feeling of wanting to play God in these stories, the idea of wanting to be ultimately responsible for our own fates without having to face the consequences of wrong choices.

Are interactive stories inherently

dangerous, then? Well, not exactly. As Kira continued to explain, these stories aren't the problem, but our culture and our personal views are. These stories with their reliance on choice and virtual responsibility can fuel the fires of a society that desires no real personal accountability, but if we approach them in the right way, they can also do the opposite.

If we approach these stories with a Christian worldview lens, whether they're games or a movie, we can analyze the themes and concepts they wish to impart to us in comparison to our beliefs. There is truth we can extract about morality and choice, responsibility, and owning up to our actions, and we can actually apply these to our own lives instead of using them to gratify a cheap imitation of accountability. If we use the themes they teach to challenge us to continue to make right choices, to continue to take responsibility for our own actions, and to continue to meditate on our own worldviews on free will and morality, then there is worth to be found in interactive media after all.

Ben Konuch is a sophomore strategic communications student and an A&E writer for Cedars. He enjoys getting sucked into good stories, playing video games and failing horribly at volleyball with his friends.



God shows his faithfulness in the midst of war in Ukraine

By Michael Cleverley

Yuki Funakoshi learned about the war in Ukraine when he got off work around 10 p.m. on February 24. For about the first two days of the war he was filled with dread. He didn't know whether his family or friends were okay.

"When things happen you don't really know the full picture," Funakoshi said. "So you assume the worst."

Funakoshi is a fifth-year Ukrainian Cedarville University student. He went to Poland with Send International, a Christian non-profit missions organization, to serve Ukrainian



Yuki Funakoshi

refugees this past summer.

"I did a lot of things, it differed from day to day," Funakoshi said. "One of the big ones that I did was just going to the main train station where everyone's coming from Ukraine."

The station is their first stop outside Ukraine.

"We would hand out essential things like toiletries, food, clothes in a blanket and things like that," he said. "I would translate a lot, because a lot of Polish volunteers, Americans, Canadians and British people wanted to help, but have a language barrier."

He went to the Ukrainian embassy to hand out gospel tracts and do personal evangelism. Long lines of

people waited to get everything completed to stay in Poland.

Funakoshi grew up in Odessa, a port city in the South of Ukraine along the Black Sea. His parents are Japanese nationals who decided to become missionaries to Ukraine around 1994. They saw an opportunity for missions work there shortly after the Soviet Union broke up because Ukraine was a predominantly atheist country.

When Russia invaded, Funakoshi's parents decided to stay and serve.

"They've done a lot of children's ministry," Funakoshi said. "In many parts of the country, including Odessa, the public schools have shut down. So, they're providing extra curricular things and a place for kids to be able to study and do homework at the church."

His parents also drive out of the country to places like Romania to buy food and other supplies they distribute in remote villages. They use these opportunities to share their faith with others and hand out Bibles and tracts.

Funakoshi visited his parents during the summer for about five days. He returned to Odessa to see what it was like. According to Funakoshi, the city is in better condition than other cities closer to the border and the Russian military.

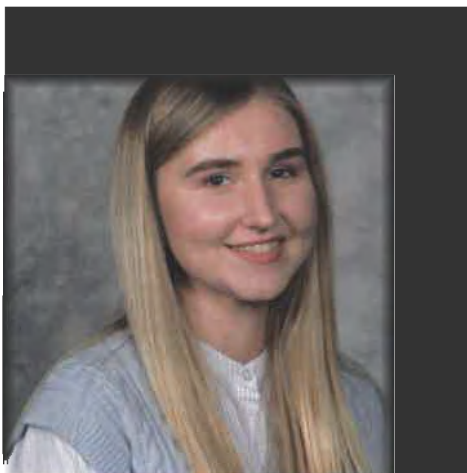
"It hasn't been attacked as badly as those that are more eastward, like Kharkiv or the Donbass and Donetsk Luhansk area," Funakoshi said. "It never was actually encircled by the Russian military. They have to get close to fire artillery. There's still a threat, because there's attacks happening from drones and missiles, maybe once a week, twice a week."

Back in April, a rocket hit an apartment half a mile from where Funakoshi lived in Odessa. Funakoshi said it felt surreal when he saw the damage during the summer. He used to walk by the apartment every day. About 10

people died in the attack, including a mother and her newborn baby.

Russia views Odessa as a strategically valuable city. If they can take Odessa then they cut Ukraine off from the Black Sea. They also may want to use Odessa and don't want to damage the infrastructure. Funakoshi said the attacks are probably meant to scare people rather than destroy the city. Funakoshi said that there was fear among the people there that, if the other cities closer to the Russian border were taken, they would be next.

Alisa Berss, a freshman Ukrainian transfer student, was also pessimistic at the beginning of the war. She'd seen the videos of Putin talking about all the things they would do when they invaded. Berss was in Kyiv when the war started and could hear the



Alisa Berss

explosions from her window.

"My mom, she was so strong," Berss said. "She was so calm, and was like, 'Hey, we have God in our hearts. He gives us the promise of eternal life, so you don't have to be scared about this. If you die, you will have your life and every good thing. I didn't have this hope that I would survive, but glory to God everything was OK.'"

Berss, her mother and her brother left Ukraine and traveled to Lithuania.



Yuki with a group at the Refugee Center in Poland where he served this past summer. / provided by Yuki Funakoshi

Her father had to stay in Ukraine because of the mandate that bans Ukrainian men 18-60 years old from leaving the country.

They had to travel through Poland to reach Lithuania. While they were traveling, a family in Poland gave them food. Their friends also helped them find the cheapest route to Lithuania by bus because it's expensive to travel directly from Ukraine to Lithuania.

"I think I trust God more than I trusted him before because I saw a lot and I was like, 'Wow, God, thank you,'" Berss said.

Berss said that, as the war went on and Ukraine did better than expected, she was encouraged and her perspective began to become positive. During the summer, Berss realized how strong her country was and how it could successfully fight back against Russia.

"It's not easy," she said. "But we do believe that we will have a victory. Because we have this bravery in our hearts."

Michael Cleverley is a senior journalism major with Asian studies and intercultural communication minors and a writer for Cedars. When not studying or working on a story for Cedars he likes to write, knit and hang out with friends.



Cedarville's christian worldview sets them apart in the sports world

By Avonlea Brown

On a typical afternoon, the halls of the Callan Athletic Center are filled with students. They are on the way to the gym for practice, to the weight room, or coming from the locker rooms after a team meeting. Students that pass one another offer encouraging remarks, a brief 'hello,' and give a friendly high-five before moving on.

There is always a faint smell of sweat, the sound of sneakers on the gym floor can be heard echoing around the building, and every once in a while you will see a soccer ball roll by followed by a student. Contrary to stereotypes, the gym atmosphere is full of friendly students who are always willing to help one another.

This community of students has a higher purpose than just performing well in their sports. This purpose is reflected in how Cedarville defines sports to its students.

The Oxford dictionary defines a sport as, "an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment." Some people add games such as Chess and esports to the list, while others scoff at the notion. There are many debates about what a sport is and the definition of sports is flexible from individual to individual.

At Cedarville University a unique component is added to the definition of sports. Sports are a way of putting the Christian worldview into practice and glorifying God.

Students at Cedarville are taught that any and all gifts they have can be used to glorify God. Athletic ability is a gift and students on sports teams are encouraged to use their time to discover how their faith can be incorporated into their sport.

The emphasis on the community between players and teams is part

of Cedarville's Christian worldview, especially humility and fellowship. Dooda Sieh, a sophomore mechanical engineering major and a runner on the men's track team, sees this as a way to take the focus of a sport off the individual and put it more on God.

"Sports can be used to glorify God when the athlete learns that the sport is not all about them," Sieh said. "When they remove all the attention from themselves and realize that all the skills they have and where they are is because of God, they start celebrating Him in all of their wins and losses."

Jo Holmes is a sophomore mechanical engineering major and participant in an intramural sand volleyball team. She enjoys the unique understanding of sports that the campus community fosters. Particularly the team focus, taking the pressure off the individuals to compete against each other.





Photograph by Logan Howard

"I think we are hard workers but we are not aggressive players," Holmes said. "Where a lot of other teams are player versus player, in a Christian community it is whole team versus whole team."

While the competition between teams remains, Cedarville also encourages both teams to have community with one another. After the game, and even sometimes before, students from Cedarville and from the other team will gather and pray.

Once the end of the game is announced, players walk exhausted to the middle of the gym. The sweaty players lock their arms around each other in a circle and bow their heads. The audience falls silent as the announcer prays over the game that just took place. They might pray for safe travels for the opposing team as they head home, for the health of the players and about the rest of the season. Arms are unlocked and the players stay to talk, or they part ways

to head home after a grueling game.

Students are also encouraged to cultivate individual relationships with players from other teams. They will pray, write a note or seek out a player from the other team and offer encouragement or just start a conversation with them. The amiable interactions between players are one of the ways Cedarville sets itself apart from other college sports teams.

While students are taught humility, competition is not lost on Cedarville's sports teams. Cedarville University is an NCAA Division II program and number 14 on the list of the top universities in that division. Its varsity sports include basketball, soccer, volleyball and more which compete with some of the top schools in the nation.

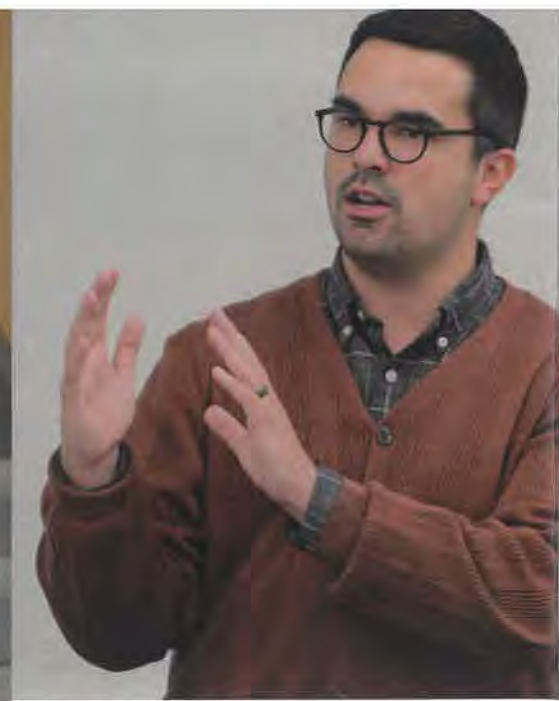
The Cedarville Athletic Department's mission statement says, "Cedarville Athletics fosters a distinctive culture in competitive athletics that commissions student-athletes to impact the world for Christ." And one of the visions they

have in accordance with that mission statement is "to change sports culture."

Through the unique teaching and practices that integrate a Christian worldview into their sports teams, Cedarville University is well on its way to making that vision a reality.

"Athletics is an important part of an institution, but at Cedarville, it is beyond the winning. You learn a lot by being part of a team, in some ways, you learn more about life than you ever will in a classroom," former basketball player and current sports information director Mark Womack said. "Your experience with teammates teaches you to serve one another and be humble around each other. It's a real teaching and learning experience and Cedarville is one of the best at fostering it."

Avonlea Brown is a sophomore journalism major and editor/writer for Cedars. She enjoys watching movies, hiking in her hometown in Maine, and spending time with friends over good food.



Ronni Kurtz pours his life's work into teaching his students

Teaching theology for the church

By Chris Karenbauer

Dr. Ronni Kurtz is one of Cedarville University's newest Bible professors. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Kurtz, his wife Kristen and their daughter Finley live in Cedarville, Ohio, where Kurtz teaches theology.

"There are many things that attracted me to Cedarville University," Kurtz said, "but one of the most important was simply the strength of the curriculum and the strength of the students here at CU. I love higher education and want to give my life towards helping institutions – and the students that make them up – thrive."

Kurtz has been teaching at Cedarville since the spring semester of 2022. In these two semesters, Kurtz has impacted his students. Junior Political Science major Joshua Heath, who was in Kurtz's Theology II class last semester, admires Kurtz for his ability to keep Christ at the center of his lectures.

"He presented on the doctrine of Christ, his role as priest, prophet and king," Heath said. "He made sure that he was Christocentric through all of it. He taught that Christ is central to salvation; Christ is central to eschatology and his return. Everything

about how he presented in that class was Christocentric."

Senior English major Grace Kohler, who was in Kurtz's Theology I class last spring and is currently in his Theology II class, speaks about how one of their Christology lectures encouraged her to remember the depth of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

"He actually made me cry a little bit because he was talking about the glorification of God," Kohler said, "and it was just so beautiful to see the glorification of Christ. It was so beautiful to see the actual depth of those words and how Christ's perfect, sinless life and his humanity and the absolute injustice of his death was for our good and for our benefit."

Kurtz wants to teach college students, whether they are Bible majors or not, that every Christian is a theologian, and they need to know how to apply theology in their lives. Theology is a joy and an adventure to remember God and what he does for his children. And Kurtz is a prime example of that to his students.

"Not only did he teach us academic concepts of theology, but he always

grounds it in how that's applicable in our Christian life," Kohler said. "He talks about how theology should be done in the church, for the church."

Along with his love for his students, Kurtz also loves the local church. When Kurtz and his family moved to Cedarville about a year ago, they searched for a church that would line up with their theological beliefs and that would help them grow in their walk with Christ. Kurtz attends a church plant in Dayton called Trinity Church where they are growing alongside the church.

"At Trinity, we have found deep community and dear friends," Kurtz said. "The church is faithful in the exposition of Scripture, the administration of the ordinances and liturgy, and in the proclamation of the gospel. We are very blessed to have found a covenant family like Trinity Church."

Because of his love for the local church, Kurtz deeply respects the local church pastors.

"While the academy is a wonderful tool for the kingdom, ultimately, Jesus is coming back for his bride, not the academy," Kurtz said. "I love what I do

vocationally, but professors are not the heroes, local church pastors and faithful church members are."

Kohler recalls that Kurtz's love for the local church translates into his lectures. She explains that Kurtz teaches his students that the church should teach theology to the congregation.

Even though students constantly hear it at Cedarville, Kurtz highly encourages students to join a local church.

"Other students and professors are a wonderful gift, but only covenant church members have the responsibility to oversee your soul," Kurtz said.

Not only do his students enjoy the topic of the lectures, but they also enjoy Kurtz's style of teaching. Heath claims that Kurtz is very down-to-earth and relatable, while Kohler claims that Kurtz aspires to be the Mr. Rogers of theology with his jokes.

"He's got a good, engaging personality," Kohler said, "but also has a clear structure to what he's talking about. So it's easy to follow, and it makes sense."

According to Kohler, Kurtz despises PowerPoints and goes old school

with a whiteboard and markers. Even so, Kurtz makes sure that his students can grasp difficult concepts of theology. He stops to allow students to ask questions, and he answers them with Scripture references to make sure the student understands thoroughly.

"I felt like he handled class very well as a professor and being accessible to his students," Heath said. "But also just as a person and being someone who is able to communicate theology with joy and hope. He has a desire for people to learn. I think there was just a clear mark in there of how much he cared."

Kurtz believes that his life's calling is to help other Christians, but especially his students, "to look at Christ until they begin to look like Christ." He embodies his calling in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which said, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Both Kohler and Heath attest to Kurtz's calling. They see that Kurtz loves the church and wants his students to also love it. He has been

teaching Kohler that theology is not just an act of study, but is also an act of worship done in church.

"Theology is not only just to give us more knowledge or sharpen our minds, but it's really to direct us to look on God and be like, 'Wow, he's so beautiful!'" Kohler said.

Heath said that Kurtz embodies the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:37, "And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'"

"I think he is truly striving to love God, and in his love, in his desire to know him, and his desire to understand this theology, he is trying to strive to know him and love him," Heath said.

"I hope students pursue their academic life as a devotion to the Lord," Kurtz said. "I pray that they spend their 1,000 days with us here at CU in a way that would cause them to treasure Christ and cherish his gospel more at graduation than they do today."

Chris Karenbauer is a senior Journalism major and the Editor-in-Chief for Cedars. She enjoys reading and writing, hanging out with friends and listening to music.



Cross guides student-athletes in position he never expected as athletic director

By Alan Brads

Growing up deep in Steelers country in West Virginia, Chris Cross gravitated toward sports and never looked back.

"We had a hoop in our driveway where I used to play with my brother," Cross said. "He would beat me like a drum every time, but I still remember when I finally beat him and realized I was pretty good."

But as a fifth-grader playing basketball in the driveway, he never dreamed that his passion would make him an athletic director at a Division II university. He was just playing ball.

Cross arrived in Cedarville in 2004 as an athletic trainer and assistant professor of athletic training.

"I had never heard of Cedarville," Cross said. "I saw an ad for an open position and I saw it was a Christian school. You never know what people mean by Christian school, so I was a little skeptical, but when I walked around campus it had a different atmosphere than I'd ever experienced before."

He excelled as an athletic trainer and connected with students in a way their coaches can't.

"What I miss about athletic training is hanging out with the athletes," he said. "Hanging out in the training room, you get to dive deep into a student-athlete's life. A lot of their identities have been wrapped up in their sport, so when they have an injury they have to do rehab for, that peels away some of those layers, and we focus on why we do what we do."

After 10 years as an athletic trainer, Cross entered the ranks of administration working with NCAA compliance, ensuring athletes and the university followed NCAA regulations for student athletes.

In July, 2021 Dr. Alan Geist stepped down from his position as athletic director to return to a teaching role, and university president Dr. Thomas White asked Cross to serve as the

interim athletic director.

White promoted Cross to full-time Athletic Director on February 18, 2022.

"If you told me 18 years ago that I'd be doing this, I'd say you're crazy," Cross said. "That was not even a thought in my mind."

Under Cross's leadership, Cedarville athletes have attended five national championships and tournaments.

"What I enjoy most about this position at Cedarville is seeing student-athletes compete hard, play with passion that is given to them by Christ, but at the end of the match we pray for the other team and show them that Christ loves them," Cross said.

Anyone who has played pick-up basketball with Cross knows about his competitive nature, but he has a deeper desire for Cedarville athletics than trophies.

"The reason we play sports is to tell people about Christ," Cross said. "Right or wrong, athletics in today's culture has been put on a pedestal above other parts of culture, so that gives us a platform."

Cross recalls his favorite moment on the job. The men's cross country team qualified for the national meet in Florida. A hot, humid day mixed with a hilly course produced a subpar run for the team, and a disappointing result. Even so, the Yellow Jacket runners spearheaded a prayer circle of students from universities across America.

"I could not have been more proud of our student-athletes than that moment right there," he said. "That's what we're all about."

Less than a year into his tenure as the athletic director, Cross has no plans of moving anytime soon.

"You don't stay at an institution for 18 years without believing in the mission," he said. "I'm sold out for this place."

He and his wife Barbara raised their three sons, Mason, Colby and Tyler

in Cedarville for the last 18 years.

Mason and Colby each competed as student athletes at Cedarville, while the youngest, Tyler, plans to attend Cedarville when he graduates from high school.

Cross preaches that athletics are good for character development, and he practices what he preaches in his own family.

"There's no better place in the world to raise a son or daughter than on the athletic field," he said.

Cross emphasized that every Cedarville athlete is just like every other student. Not once did Cross mention the word "athlete" without prefacing it with "student."

"I want to see our students and student-athletes get to know each other, and realize that this person is the same as them, and struggles with the same things, and deals with the same challenges that I do."

Just as Cross wants student athletes to reach out and get to know students, he wants students to come support their athlete friends.

"Students cheering like crazy in the stands creates a great environment, and it's easier to do that when you have a relationship with the players," he said.

Whether it's working one-on-one as a trainer, or at the top as athletic director, Cross loves working with students for the glory of God.

His office reveals this mindset. His Steelers bobbleheads show he remembers his past, his framed photos of Cedarville athletes show he's living in the present, his business and marketing books show he's looking forward to the future, and the Bible, on the end of his bookshelf closest to his chair, shows his mind is always set on eternity.

Alan Brads is a sophomore journalism student and frequent contributor for Cedars. He enjoys playing the drums and speaking Spanish, and watches Buckeye football like his life depends on it.



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