



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

One of the most prolific authors in church history is John Bunyan (1628–1688). Though he is most well-known for *Pilgrim's Progress*, his book entitled *Grace Abounding* captures my heart. He writes in the Preface, "It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of grace in their souls." He shares that before he knew Christ, his delight was in the "pleasure of vileness." While traveling as a "tinker" he came under the conviction of the gospel as he heard a group of ladies talk of their conversion. When Bunyan finally came to Christ, he writes that grace became sweet, and love for God like a hot fire. How about us? Let's speak with each other of our own salvation. Such talk will ignite our souls!



Colin Landry came to Virginia Beach in the fall of 1997 at the direction of Pastor Matt Olson of his home church in Colorado. After a year of seminary at VBTS, he married Tonia. He now quips, "More than one professor said to me that my academic career improved after my marriage!" Both Colin and Tonia made a lasting impact upon the faculty and student body with their hard work ethic, desire to walk with Christ, and insightful questions both in and out of the classroom. Upon Colin's MDiv graduation in May 2003, they returned to minister in Colin's home church in Denver. In 2005, God providentially relocated them to Boston, MA to a church in need of "resuscitation" due to its decaying facilities and few members. Over these fifteen years, God has used the Landrys to develop and strengthen *Evangelical Baptist Church* into a vibrant fellowship. The Boston area is not always friendly to the gospel of Jesus. In Colin's words, "Some days are better than others." Yet his passion to know truth has sustained his soul. He says, "The Bible is as fresh and interesting to me as it's ever been!" Our prayers are with the Landry family as they minister grace to the people of Boston.



A Pastoral Reflection about Leading a Church through COVID

Guest Author: Colin Landry, Pastor of Evangelical Baptist Church

If you take the pulse of today's church leaders, you'll discover that "stuck" and "directionless" describe how many pastors feel at the moment. You could probably throw in "stunned" too—not so much surprised, but so transfixed by all that's occurring as to make forward movement nigh impossible.

There are many questions to answer: What exactly is the scope and danger of this virus? What measures should be taken? To what extent should churches cooperate with government direction? How much of the church's regular schedule should be curtailed, if at all? To what extent do I prod people to gather? Is live-streaming a blessing or a means to unhealthy enabling? What is good leadership, for both the short term and the long-term health of the body? Having to answer these and other similar questions drastically slows down a ministry. And then, there is the arduous work of thinking through how to implement your answers!

And there are still more thoughts that might slow you down: haven't Covid and election year and societal upheaval—to borrow words from a better context—been "appointed for the fall and rising of many...so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed"? No doubt, all of us will agree that these are "interesting times" we are in. Society—and Christians too—are responding in fascinating ways. But they are not just responding, they are re-aligning. Aligning with causes that continually surprise. How do we keep track of all the shifting coalitions?

The Resurrection accounts in the four gospels provide a needed emphasis for pastors today: the risen Christ is on the move. **He is going before you to Galilee** (Matt. 28:7). *Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee* (Mark 16:7). Rather than immediately telling the disciples of Jesus' resurrection, Luke shows our Lord in action, intersecting two disciples on their way home to Emmaus. And in John's gospel, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene: "Don't keep holding on to me, because I have not ascended to the Father. But do this, Go tell my brothers, **"I am ascending..."** In other words, Jesus is en route. He has plans to keep. Don't try holding Him back!

This orchestrated portrayal—not an ensconced Jesus, nor a reactive Jesus, but Jesus out in front, working out His agenda—provides followers of Christ a big, general sense: **The Lord is at work**. Always. Yes, in every generation there will be periods when Jesus' servants feel stuck, directionless, antagonized, unproductive. Yet they can recall that the Master isn't hampered; actually He's gone ahead of them to provide the ultimate answer to their vexation. He's at the vanguard of a New Creation Push. Even if the world seems to have entered some late stage of its passing away, the Lord is always at work—He is the Doer of great deeds.

In various historic upheavals, the primary business of the minister is detailed in these Resurrection texts: **straightaway go to meet the resurrected Lord**. So yes, advise your wife that you'll be away for a couple of hours. Leave your phone at home, equipped only with your Bible and notebook. Drive to some remote spot, and once there, give your entire attention to reading and praying.

Throughout COVID, I encourage you to repeat this excursion. Many times, what you'll take away from those "meetings" is the vivid idea that things are still moving forward apace, and the Lord is out in front, directing it all. Brothers, the congregation you are among *needs* you to have that assurance and *needs* your faith more than any policy response or insight into the current state of evangelicalism. God is for us and with us.... *even to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).