

Spiritual Deepening Week: An Intimate and Moving Celebration of Faith

by Zach Baur

From Sept. 11-13, Mount Vernon Nazarene University celebrated Spiritual Deepening Week with three nights of chapel services. This event provides students with an opportunity to further deepen their relationship with Christ while bonding with the community of MVNU. Pastor Stephanie Lobdell collaborated with Shane Lima, a pastor and addiction and substance abuse counselor from Rhode Island, to deliver sermons on these nights.

“Shane is a personal friend,” Lobdell said, further clarifying that they have worked together before at this summer’s Nazarene Youth Conference. She described Lima’s character as being “wise,” “kind” and “humble.” Lima brought a powerful and enthusiastic energy to the services. Pastor Lobdell said that she “loved watching students engage in Shane’s simple yet profound metaphors, like Uno cards and almond milk!”

The evening services placed emphasis on worship, with more time devoted to it than in MVNU’s daytime services. Groups of students gathered in front of the stage to show their spiritual devotion and their praise with the worship band. Others could be seen standing at their seats, wrapping their arms around each other’s shoulders as they sang to the Lord. Pastor Stephanie takes great joy in seeing the bonds between the students, saying, “The group is smaller and more intimate, which allows for a deeper connection with the speaker and a longer time to reflect.” The passionate crowd was bathed in stage lighting; and the light reflected off the colorful stained-glass cathedral windows, adding to the deeply spiritual atmosphere.

Spiritual Deepening Week gives students new opportunities to learn, grow and to embrace God’s wisdom and love. Seeing the passion from the speakers, the band and the audience makes for an emotional and moving experience. As Pastor Lobdell said, “It is a gift to watch students encounter God in new ways and connect with one another as a community of faith.”



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Imaged: Reflecting God’s Character to the World

by Faith West

At the start of every school year, the Campus Ministries team at Mount Vernon Nazarene University chooses a new theme for their chapel services. This school year, the chapel theme will center around the idea of Imaged and discuss what it truly means to be made in the image of God. According to Rev. Stephanie Lobdell, MVNU’s campus pastor, most services will explore “how one orients one’s life when we understand ourselves to be made in the image of God.”

Though the chapel theme appears fully formed to students, Lobdell noted, “It’s not an easy process.” She explained that the process of developing a new theme is a discipline of paying attention to the different language, images and captivating thoughts that are continually rising to the surface. This is how Lobdell came to view “image of God as this orienting vision” and knew it should serve as the basis for the new chapel theme. She stated, “I just had a real sense of peace that this is going to be a helpful lens for all of us to come to know God and to know ourselves.”

In order to aid students in their understanding of God, Lobdell plans to study the 10 Commandments in conversation with the words of Jesus as the framework for this year’s chapel services. She admitted that this seems unrelated to the Imaged theme but believes that the commandments reveal God’s character. She explained, “We start first with who God is and then [ask]: How is that refracted out through us?”

Overall, Lobdell’s hope for students is simple. She stated, “I hope that our own identity is rooted, I hope that [it] transforms our relationships; but above all, I hope that we come to know God in new ways and have a deeper sense of how we partner with God by reflecting his character in the world.”



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Fall Ball Kicking Off at MVNU

By Jack Moore

When you think of fall, you most likely think of cold nights, pumpkin patches and football. Something special is brewing this fall in Mount Vernon. The Mount Vernon Nazarene University's Cougar baseball team will play fall ball games that, for the first time in three years, count towards the regular 2024 season.

Senior Casey Kalman said, "Fall ball is so important for baseball. As an offensive player, getting to face live pitchers hitting in game-like situations makes your practice so much more game-like. It prepares you to go into winter and get more live at-bats leading into the spring to hit the ground running."

The Cougar baseball team will play the University of Michigan-Dearborn this fall for three games that count towards the regular season. In 2022, the teams played a total of three times, and the Cougars had a losing record of 1-2. Considering neither team has seen each other since, this will make for a good series. Kalman added, "We should be able to be in the top three this year in the league. I think we should be able to fight for a top spot this year." The meeting of these teams will gear them both for a great season ahead in the spring.

The games will be played at Mount Vernon starting on Oct. 6 at p.m. with a doubleheader on Oct. 7 beginning at noon.



The Justice Project Defines "Justice"

By Allison Prouty

The Justice Project is bringing back the Justice Talks at Mount Vernon Nazarene University. This year, the project will be led by Dr. Hank Spaulding, who is the associate campus pastor and director of the Justice Project, and his student team of Haley Schreiner, Luke Mohnasky and Nasir Cousin.

On Sept. 5, a Justice Talk was held to set the tone for the year. To do this, they brought in a panel of MVNU faculty to discuss the topic of justice itself. The panel was made of Dr. Jennifer Jacobsen, assistant professor of social work; Dr. Doug VanNest, dean of the school of Christian ministry; Dr. Judy Gregg, dean of the school of nursing and health sciences; Dr. Jennifer Ballenger, assistant professor of youth and family ministries; and Tavaris Taylor, assistant vice president for intercultural engagement and learning.

Dr. Spaulding opened the first talk by discussing the purpose of the Justice Project. "I want us to have serious, honest dialogue ... I don't want this to be seen as an organization that's doing anything other than trying to help us walk in the way of Jesus," said Dr. Spaulding. While the word "justice" may be polarizing within Christianity, he said that justice is a form of discipleship. The word "justice" appears 555 times in the Bible, which he said means scripture can inform us on justice.

The panelists discussed their favorite passages from the Bible that are about justice. Dr. Ballenger said that "The attribute that I think most [about] when I think about Jesus and what really depicts justice is his love. It's just this authentic, incredible love that isn't something you have to earn. In fact, it's seeing past all the stuff that we see and just see that we matter." Dr. VanNest pointed to Amos 5, in which God calls out that the people's worship meant nothing if they were mistreating or oppressing others at the same time. "There's just this clear word from the Lord that our worship is absolutely empty and meaningless if we do not embody the righteousness and justice of what it means to be God's people in the world," said Dr. VanNest.

Dr. Spaulding asked the panel if they thought MVNU should have a Justice Project. Taylor responded that, "My hope is that we grow, in not the social maturity, but the spiritual maturity that we need that these conversations become a part of our spiritual formation and spiritual development, and it is something that we actively pursue," to the point that discussing justice is a form of worship. The consensus of the panel can be summarized by Dr. Gregg, who said that "we need a safe place where we can ask these questions or learn together."

Keep an eye out for emails and posters around campus for more information about upcoming Justice Talks this semester!



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