


A Quiet Semester

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A Quiet Semester

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The spring semester of 2020 will go down in history at Dordt University as the “quiet semester.” Since 5 p.m. on March 5 when we began our spring break, the campus has been eerily quiet—devoid of the usual hustle and bustle of teaching, learning, and living that enlivens this place.

This week, a good friend mentioned to me that organizational leadership during this season has felt like hiking up a sand dune—where with every step forward there is also the simultaneous feeling that forward progress is deceptively elusive.

During the past five months, I’ve found myself returning many times to Psalm 46:

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

Psalm 46:1-3

Although we haven't faced physical earthquakes, it has been a season of reflection and disappointment during which I'll admit to more than one night of fitful sleep.

Within this season, I've also been immensely grateful and impressed with Defender Nation and other communities in the following ways:

- Our students—taking challenging news in stride and persevering in the face of disappointment and struggle.
- Our faculty and staff—for rebooting the learning environment to deliver excellence that transcended time and place in an online world.
- Our board of trustees—for having the wisdom three years ago to invest in building online tools and capabilities to put Dordt ahead of the curve in the transition from face-to-face teaching
- Our supporting constituency—for stepping forward to raise more than \$550,000 for the Hope Fund to provide emergency assistance to Dordt students particularly impacted financially by the pandemic
- Our federal, state, and local government—who each played their roles to provide financial and medical support needed here locally to give us hope to return for a fall semester

As I've repeated Psalm 46 over and over again during these five months, I have realized that, while I'd love to have the chance to hit "redo" on the spring 2020 semester with basketball games, choir concerts, and a proper graduation, I'm actually grateful for the quiet semester. As the Psalmist ends the passage in Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The season of stillness has made clear the sovereignty of our God who reigns on high.

So, while I'm looking forward to students returning to campus this fall, I'm also grateful for the reminder of God's sovereignty and control. As we finalize our return-to-campus plans here in July and August, I take heart and confidence that all will be well, by virtue of these last words of Psalm 46: "The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."