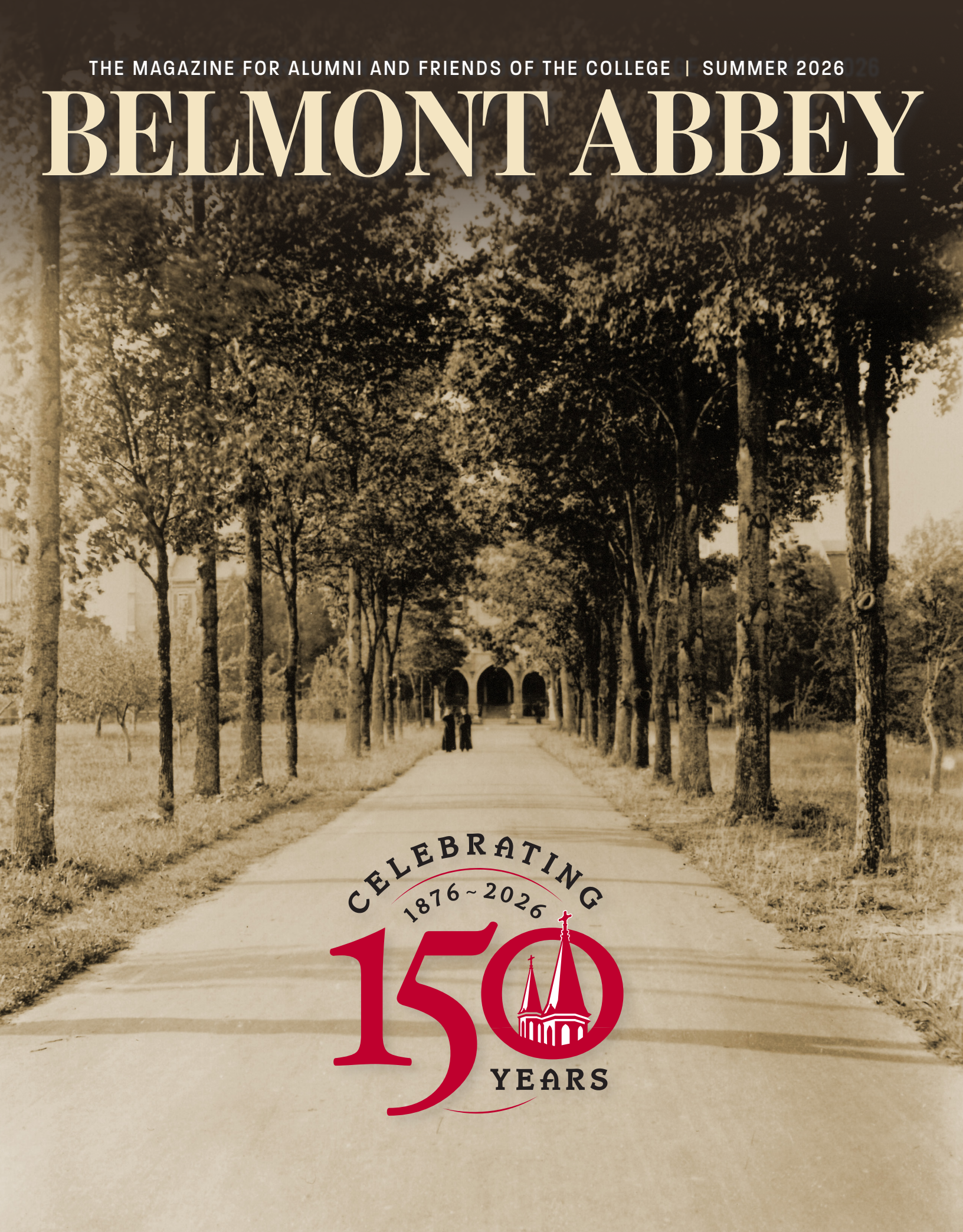
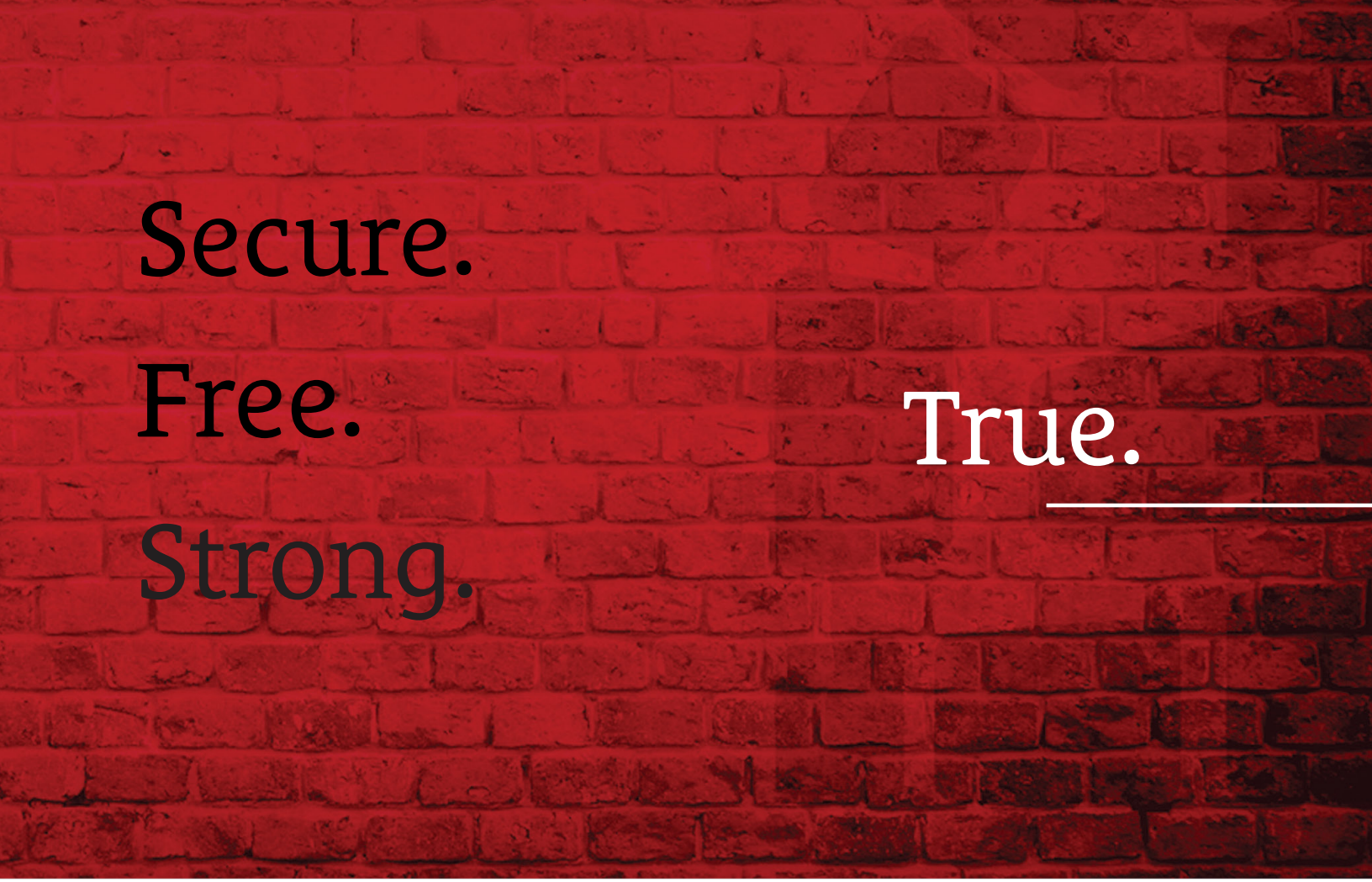
THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE | SUMMER 2026

BELMONT ABBEY



CELEBRATING
1876 ~ 2026
150
YEARS



You can be the reason a student discovers who they were meant to be.

Belmont Abbey changes lives. We've seen it for 150 years, so we know the truly transformative impact your generosity can make.

You can be the hope for that young person sacrificing everything just to be here at the Abbey… so that they, like generations of Abbey alumni, can bring the fruits of this essential legacy into the world: serving our Church, our country, our culture.

HELP ENSURE THE ABBEY LEGACY

for another **150 years.**

Together we can reach $150 million by the end of our 150th anniversary year in 2027. Join us in the mission to see our communities, our future, and our next generation, **Made True** in the light of God's grace.

150 FOR 150

MADE TRUE

The Campaign for Belmont Abbey College

1876-2026

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE

150th ANNIVERSARY

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Belmont Abbey COLLEGE
150th ANNIVERSARY

Greetings from the Abbey,

and happy sesquicentennial year to all the members of our community, on and off campus!

As the new Vice President of Advancement, I am thrilled to join this exceptional institution at such a historic time, and I look forward to meeting many of you at this year's Homecoming festivities.



The more I've learned about Belmont Abbey College and its faithful and dedicated family of alumni, faculty, staff, and benefactors, the more eager I've become to place my experience and expertise at the service of the mission they share.

Abbey alumni have carried the fruits of their education into the rest of y impacting their families and communities. The legacy of Belmont even further. The very life of the Church in the South traces its e sacrificial leadership of Abbot-Bishop Leo Haid and the dedication of the monks who established schools, religious houses, and parishes across the region.

Mindful of this legacy and this historic moment, I hope you enjoy this 150th Anniversary issue of the Belmont Abbey Magazine, in which you'll find not only snapshots of this history and reminders of this wide-ranging legacy, but also glimpses of an ever-brighter future.

In these pages, I invite you to rediscover the men and women who prepare Abbey students to embrace personal and scientific excellence, those who remind us that the arts enrich our humanness and inspire our communities, and those whose impact continues to bear fruit in the lives of alumni decades after graduation.

Thank you for your sacrifice to ensure that new generations of Belmont Abbey students continue to receive the best of Benedictine liberal arts education. Your prayers and financial support give our future teachers, nurses, parents, pastors, and leaders the fruits of a 150-year legacy.

Thank you for sharing this mission. Thank you for being a crucial part of the Belmont Abbey community. None of this would be possible without you.

Happy 150th!

Sincerely,

Dan

Daniel Wiseman
Vice President of Advancement

BELMONT ABBEY MAGAZINE

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MISSION STATEMENT *of* BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE:

Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. In this endeavor, we are guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning. Exemplifying Benedictine hospitality, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others.



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Historical image of Abbey Lane circa 1915.

Above: President Talley shares updates with local alumni at a Charlotte social last spring.



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Campus center, 1907
COLORIZED WITH GOOGLE GEMINI

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

May God Bless our Abbey Alumni

DR. JEFFERY W. TALLEY
President

EACH DAY IN CHRIST is a day of celebration. A day of accomplishment. A day when we look ahead to what comes next. But it is also a great time to pause and look around with gratitude. Gratitude is one of the most important virtues we can carry into life. It keeps us grounded. It reminds us that none of us accomplishes anything on our own. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to our alumni and all who support our college in love, prayer, and resources. It is with gratitude that I think of you at this moment.

My message today is for our alumni. Remember when you received your diploma. It had your name on it. But your diploma also carried the fingerprints of many others: parents who sacrificed, professors who challenged yo who encouraged you, coaches who p mentors who believed in you, and l prayed for you even when you did



Some of you may have worked jobs while carrying full course loads. Some faced uncertainty, disappointment, illness, or loss during your years here. Yet you persevered. And along the way, people helped carry you. Gratitude begins when we recognize that truth. I hope you have carried that gratitude since graduation.

At Belmont Abbey College, we speak often about educating the whole person — mind, body, and spirit. But education is not merely about achievement. It is about learning how to live well and how to serve others well. A grateful person becomes a generous person. A grateful heart recognizes blessings not as possessions to keep, but as gifts to share.

The world can encourage entitlement, outrage, and constant comparison. It tells you to focus on what you lack instead of what you have. Resist that temptation.

Be grateful for small things: meaningful work, faithful friends, opportunities to serve, moments of peace, and the privilege of learning and growing throughout your life.

And when success comes — and I know it has for many of you — remember gratitude then as well. Because humility in success is just as important as perseverance in hardship.

I hope you remember Belmont Abbey College not only for and exams, but for the community ped you. I hope you remember the versations that challenged your thinking, the friendships that strengthened your character, and the faith that reminded you that your life has purpose.

Most of all, I hope you left this place understanding that gratitude is not weakness. It is strength. It changes the way we lead, the way we work, the way we love, and the way we see the world.

Alumni, thank you for the privilege of being part of your journey. Thank you for the example you have set for one another. And thank you for the hope you bring into the future.

May God bless you with wisdom, courage, faith, and above all, gratitude.

God bless Belmont Abbey College and all the wonderful monks who give so much to make this the special place that it is!

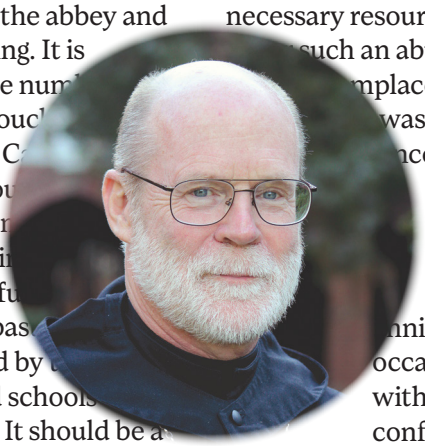
FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Rejoicing Always: Our Sesquicentennial Gratitude

ABBOT PLACID SOLARI, OSB
Chancellor

WRITING TO THE THESSALONIANS, the Apostle admonishes them: *Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus* (I Thess: 5:16-18). This is an appropriate motto for this 150th anniversary year of Belmont Abbey. This is especially true in light of the humble beginnings, when one monk and two students arrived on a somewhat dilapidated farm and took up residence together in a log cabin.

Rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving all interpenetrate and mingle together in the celebrations of this sesquicentennial year. The century and a half of uninterrupted service by the abbey and college is cause for rejoicing. It is impossible to estimate the num… persons who have been touc… service not only in North C… also in the monasteries fou… members of the abbey co… Florida, Georgia and Virgi… becomes all the more joyfu… realizes that the monks' pas… and the education offered by … and other abbey-founded schools … fruit unto everlasting life. It should be a… cause of rejoicing for us that we have been given the privilege in this time and place to build on and continue the good work of all those who labored before us.



It seems clear to me that God's Providence has been at work here for the past 150 years. So often, when circumstances were dire, the right person appeared, or the precise, necessary resources arrived. It was …such an abundance as to allow us …mplacent or entitled, but …was needed was supplied. …nce is never exhausted, so …nniversary provides the occasion for us to pray with greater trust and confidence through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians that what is needed will continue to be provided.

Most of all, this is a year of thanksgiving for all who, beginning with Father Jeremiah O'Connell and his vision of a religious community and school, have generously given their lives, their talents and their treasure to this good work, "so that in all things God may be glorified."

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Why Study Literature?

DR. HANNAH ZDANSKY

Associate Professor and Chair, English Department

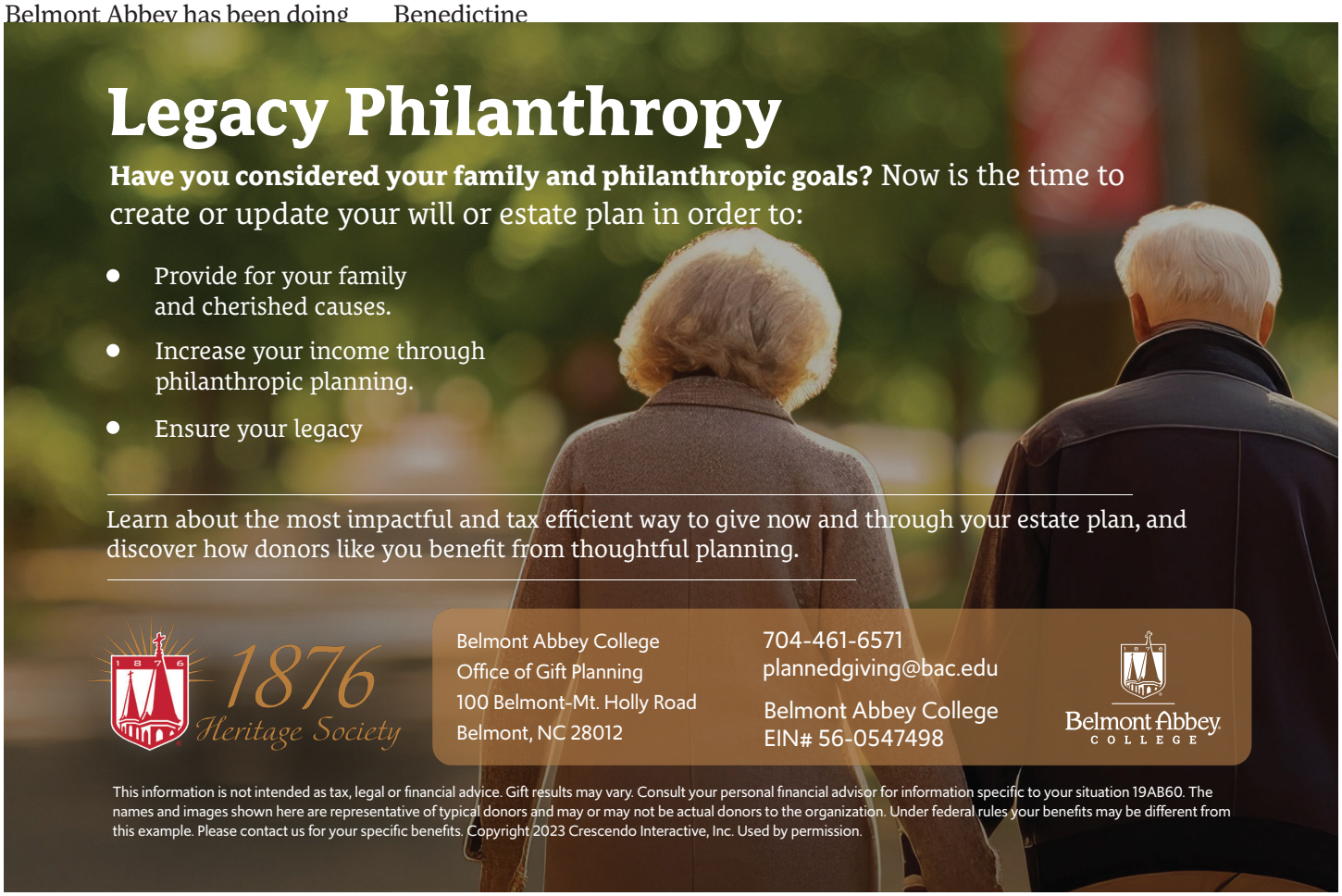
IN A CULTURE THAT OFTEN EQUATES SUCCESS with income and elevates corporate profit above the well-being of people and the stewardship of God's creation, what should the prudent person do "to get ahead"? Studying the liberal arts, much less majoring in one, seems like an injudicious waste in the increasingly difficult race to financial security. We, of course, need to ask why, as a society, we have these problems, how we got here, and what is to be done. But in response to the question of how to get ahead, we also need to ask, "get ahead to where?"

St. Gregory the Great—monk, pope, and biographer of St. Benedict—discusses the art of reading in the preface to his *Moralia in Job*. "Sacred scripture," he writes, "is set before the eyes of the mind like a kind of mirror, th may see our inward face in it; for th learn the deformities, therein we beauties that we possess; there sensible what progress we are too how far we are from profici Gregory goes on to explain wha does: "It relates the deeds of the stirs the hearts of the weak to fol example, and while it commemora victorious deeds, it strengthens our fe against the assaults of our vices; and its words have this effect, that the mind is so much the less dismayed amidst conflicts as it sees the triumphs of so many brave men [and women] set before it." Our task as readers, St. Gregory insists, is that "We should transform within ourselves that which we read, that when the mind is moved by hearing, the life may concur to the execution of that which it has heard." In other words, we are called to examine our lives through the process of examining Scripture; we learn to read one by learning to read the other. And the end result for which St. Gregory hopes? Metanoia. Conversion. A reorienting towards God. It is not too hard to see how great literature participates in this. At the end of his bury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer, quoting akes the following bold claim for his re book seith, 'Al that is writen is doctrine.' And that is myn recently, Pope Francis has dispensable literature is to the In the Letter of His Holiness n the Role of Literature in notes that "reading a literary us in the position of 'seeing the eyes of others,' thus gaining a breadth of perspective that broadens our humanity. We develop an imaginative empathy that enables us to identify with how others see, experience and respond to reality. Without such empathy, there can be no solidarity, sharing, compassion, mercy. In reading we discover that our feelings are not simply our own, they are universal [...]." It should come as no surprise, then, that Benedictine education, which seeks to form the whole human person—mind, body, and spirit—should uphold the value of literature in the curriculum.



Engaging with literature in meaningful ways not only stands to make the reader a better person; the societal effects can be exponential. The proof of the pudding, when it comes to our learning, is in how we live. Returning to Pope Francis' letter, we find that "In reading about violence, narrowness or frailty on the part of others, we have an opportunity to reflect on our own experiences of these realities. By opening up to the reader a broader view of the grandeur and misery of human experience, literature teaches us patience in trying to understand others, humility in approaching complex situations, meekness in our judgement of individuals and sensitivity to our human condition." Over the course of its one hundred and fifty years, Belmont Abbey has been doing the good work of bearing this wisdom to a world torn apart by pride and avarice, divided by hatred and partisan thinking. As humans, we are quicker to judge than to listen and learn. We are more adamant to shove our positions down other people's throats than we are willing to reflect and consider our own points of view and whether they require nuance. In the end, the purpose of an education lies not in material wealth, though providing for oneself is important. Rather, the true testament to a good education is in how reflective, morally upright, kind, and charitable we become. We should seek to learn as much as possible, but we can never know everything. What is most important is learning to listen, cultivating the Benedictine practice of *obaudire* (> Eng. obedience), or 'deep listening,' in order to love as Christ loved. The close reading of literature trains us emotionally and spiritually in this process, helping us to refine our affections, our desires, and our wills.

God's radical, profound Love is the Truth upon which everything is predicated. This is the reality that Dante spiritually digests over the course of his journey in the *Commedia*, until he can say, in its final lines, "now my will and my desire were turned, / as wheels that move in equilibrium, / by the love that moves the sun and the other stars." Dante's will—his entire being—is now in tune with the Divine—the source of his being—and all of creation. Such joy, he says, is inexpressible.



BELMONT ABBEY

NEWS



It Begins *at* the Abbey

Serving the Church in North Carolina by forming future leaders

BY LAURA SCHAFFER
Editor

RECOGNIZED BY THE NEWMAN GUIDE for our fidelity to the Catholic Church, Belmont Abbey College has maintained an essentially religious mission for 150 years, sending graduates into the world to impact culture with the fruits of Catholic higher education. Over 150 years, Belmont Abbey has embraced the evangelizing mission of the Church, both in North Carolina and beyond.

Today we continue this essential work by:

- Forming future priests
- Training the next generation of dea
- Forming strong and ethical leaders business, finance, politics, and mor
- Developing teachers in Catholic an schools
- Making a home for MiraVia and th choose life
- Hosting youth discernment retreat Bishop's Youth Pilgrimage, Quo Vad Altum
- Nurturing faith-based leadership a through our Hintemeyer Catholic Leadership program





ABOVE: (Left to right) Carson Cannon, John Harrison, Ronan Ostendorf, Gabriel Lugo, and Mateo Perez made up the Abbey's 2024 graduating class of seminarians.

RIGHT: Hintemeyer Catholic Leadership students at the 2025 Charlotte Eucharistic Congress.

Diocesan Leadership

In 1876, Benedictine monks arrived in North Carolina to begin the apostolate that would be Belmont Abbey College. Infusing Catholic higher education into the American South, they also stewarded the life of the Church in North Carolina, staffing and founding parishes and bringing sacramental life to scattered but growing communities, state-wide. By 1910, Belmont Abbey was recognized as the hub of a diocese that embraced the entire state until the creation of the Raleigh Diocese in 1924, and which continued to serve western North Carolina until the Charlotte Diocese emerged in 1972.
And this was just the beginning...

Forming Faithful Leaders

Seminarians studying at nearby St. Joseph Seminary receive undergraduate formation through Belmont Abbey College, earning their B.A. in Philosophy and preparing for advanced theological degrees before returning to serve the Church as priests. We have welcomed 82 seminarians since 2016, and we expect up to 25 in Fall 2026. 120+ alumni have gone on to serve as priests.

Diaconal candidates prepare for diocesan ministry through the Abbey's formation program. During the 2025-2026 Academic Year, 20+ men were enrolled in the program.
Since 2013 MiraVia has found a home on our campus, offering full, material, and long-term support to pregnant, college-aged women from across the country. Each resident receives free BAC tuition so that she can complete her undergraduate education while embracing the gift of life and building her family's future.

Belmont Abbey has partnered with the Charlotte diocese to create a new Graduate Certificate in Catholic Education Leadership, which, together with our M.A. in Classical and Liberal Arts Education, will only increase our impact on Catholic and classical education in the Carolinas and beyond.
Our Hintemeyer Catholic Leadership Scholars staff the annual Bishop's Youth Pilgrimage, hosted on campus. Hintemeyers also help to run youth tracks at the regional Eucharistic Congress, both practicing and modeling servant leadership. BAC

SCAN THE QR CODE to find out how to give to support our faithful mission.

Excellence *in* Teaching

Belmont Abbey College Honors Dr. Ellington with Adrian Award

BY SARAH BOLTON '19
Director of Marketing and Public Relations



Dr. Ellington's dedication to student success has spanned 20 years at the Abbey.

BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE hosted its 35th Annual Academic Awards Ceremony on April 24, 2026 in the Haid Ballroom, recognizing outstanding student and faculty achievements across the college. Among the thirty-five awards presented was the Adrian Award for Teaching Excellence, one of the institution's highest faculty distinctions. Established in 1984 by Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Adrian, the award celebrates faculty members who demonstrate exceptional commitment to teaching and student development.

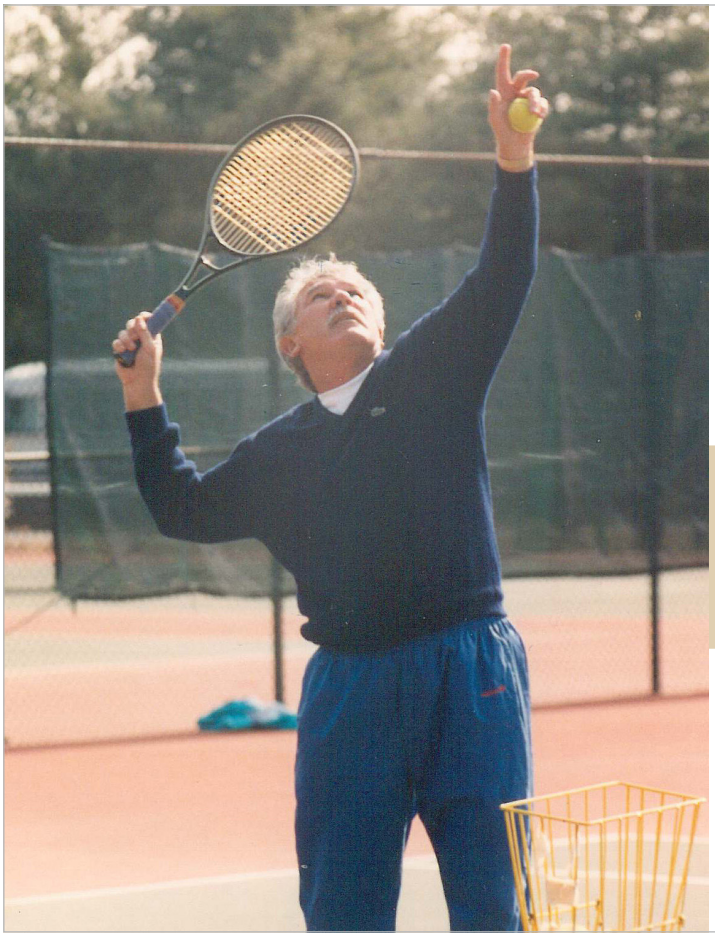
Belmont Abbey College encourages students to learn, seek truth, and thrive in an authentic and supportive environment, guided by exceptional faculty who lead in their fields and serve as exemplary community members. This year's recipient of the Adrian Award is Dr. Jennifer Ellington, Associate Professor of Biology.

"As Dr. Ellington marks her twentieth year at the Abbey, her impact extends far beyond the curriculum," said Dr. Joseph Wysoc-ki, former Provost at Belmont Abbey College. "She is an exceptional professor and mentor who goes above and beyond to support her students both academically and personally. She truly embodies the Benedictine hallmarks, fostering a community rooted in hospitality, humility, and a genuine commitment to the growth and well-being of each student."

Dr. Ellington is widely recognized for her engaging instruction across courses such as genetics, microbiology, and molecular biology, as well as for her dedication to undergraduate research opportunities. In her role as the college's Pre-Health advisor, she also plays a key part in strengthening professional pathways for students, helping many successfully pursue admission to competitive medical programs.

Her influence is best reflected in the words of her students. One student shared, "Dr. Ellington has a kind and gentle heart. She is extremely smart and over-qualified as a professor, and I feel lucky to professor. She loves what she teaches, and her excitement is contagious. She knows what I am capable of and encourages me to work hard and reach my potential. Dr. Ellington takes time and effort to learn about her students, and it makes me and other students feel important. Along with her laugh, her happiness is very contagious, and I never feel intimidated to show up to office hours."

Rooted in the Benedictine tradition, Belmont Abbey College remains committed to fostering a learning environment centered on truth, excellence, and virtue. The Adrian Award continues to highlight faculty who embody these ideals. Previous recipients include Dr. Nancy Llewellyn, Dr. Thomas Varacalli, Dr. Matthew Siebert, Dr. Heather Ayala, and Dr. Mike McLeod. BAC



Dr. Michael P. Reidy Athletic Hall of Fame Banquet

October 1, 2026

Haid Ballroom

5:30pm - 9:00pm

Honoring:

1987-88 Men's Basketball Team Hannah Schellenberg '15 (Volleyball)

Tristan Keas '10 (Men's Lacrosse)

Chris Neidermeier '09 (Wrestling)

Tim "TJ" Reilly '79 (Tennis)

Reserve your ticket today:

Or visit www.bac.edu/HOF

1876-2026

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE 150th ANNIVERSARY



BELMONT ABBEY
NEWS

A Spirit *of* Generosity

Student-athletes take up the challenge to give and to serve

BY SHANNON CORBETT
Associate Athletic Director for Academic Services

BELMONT ABBEY STUDENT-ATHLETES and coaches continually seek opportunities to make a difference. They host youth sports clinics, write cards for nursing home residents and veterans, volunteer at Holy Angels, and deliver flowers to widows on Valentine's Day. During this year's annual fall food drive, student-athletes collected enough donations to fill four vehicles, helping the Belmont Food Pantry restock its shelves ahead of the holiday season. It's all part of being a Crusader.

At the heart of Crusader culture, in fact, is the belief that we become our best selves in community, that personal excellence isn't something we can separate from teamwork, compassion, and generosity. This same vision, rooted in the Benedictine hallmarks, has led to Belmont Abbey's historical high performance in the Conference Carolinas Messick Awards, which celebrate exceptional sportsmanship.

Far from a purely top-down emphasis, Belmont Abbey student athletes continue to match the enthusiasm of coaches and staff for sport, virtue, and service. Belmont Abbey College's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), composed of student leaders from each athletic team, has a mission to foster relationships among teams, serve as the voice of student-athletes, and give back to the community. These representatives gather monthly to discuss ways to improve attendance at Red Sea events, review NCAA legislation, advocate for student-athletes, and lead community service initiatives. Each year, SAAC continues to reach new heights, demonstrating what it means to serve others and make a meaningful impact beyond the playing field.

NCAA Division II formed its official relationship with the Make-A-Wish Foundation in 2003, with the intention of growing a community service focus on individual campuses. In 2017, the student leaders who make up Belmont Abbey's SAAC began to fully embrace that mission by transforming their annual Mr. Crusader competition into the centerpiece of a new fundraising effort on behalf of the student body.



Applause fills the Wheeler Center as the 2026 candidates for Mr. Crusader face off.



Audience members vote for their favorite acts by giving to Make-A-Wish.

Crusaders for a Cause

Today's Mr. Crusader calls for a conte team to compete in athletic challenge interviews, and a talent competition, collect donations throughout the eve Make-A-Wish. The contestant who ra earns the title. What began in 2017 – v single night – has grown into an eager event each spring, with students arriv before the event to secure seats, pack top row. This year, SAAC members or and staffed the event, collecting so m audience that at the end of the night, Jarzyniecki announced a $7,750 total Crusader history.

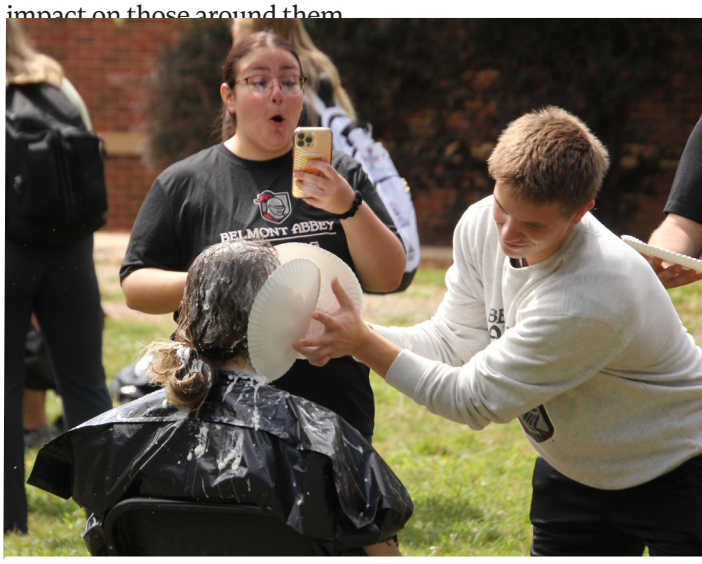


Brendan Patton rocks out, becoming this year's Mr. Crusader.

This student-led commitment to Make-A-Wish extends far beyond a single night, however. In 2022, SAAC also initiated Pied For A Cause, which has become another annual fundraising tradition. Attendees pay $5 for a whipped-cream pie, while coaches and staff volunteer to have these pies thrown in their faces. The event has become a favorite among students, staff, and community members, combining laughter with a meaningful cause. Last fall, this student fundraising success led Make-A-Wish to request that Pied For A Cause serve as a wish send-off celebration for a young Gastonia cancer survivor preparing for his Disney wish trip. Student-athletes not only collected donations but also took time to meet the young man and his family, and in just two hours, the event raised $2,858, all while creating memories that extended well beyond the fundraising total. Because of these efforts, Belmont Abbey's SAAC has earned the Conference Carolinas Make-A-Wish Award for seven consecutive years. During the 2025-26 academic year, in fact, Belmont Abbey student-athletes raised $10,608, ranking third among all NCAA Division II institutions nationwide and jumping from fifth place the previous year.

Culture of Service

When student-athletes are not raising money for Make-A-Wish, they remain focused on serving their communities in countless other ways. In the Helper Helper National Report, Belmont Abbey ranked ninth among all NCAA Division II institutions in community service hours. From August 2025 through May 2026, student-athletes completed 7,799 hours of community service — an increase of more than 1,500 hours from the previous year. Specific teams also look for ways to give back to the community. Men's and Women's Lacrosse, for example, now partner with RyzAbove Fitness in the RyzAbove Fitness Obstacle Challenge. RyzAbove is a local organization dedicated to helping neurodiverse teens and adults live healthy and active lives, and this Alumni Field event brings participants together to complete a series of obstacles while promoting camaraderie, fitness, and community engagement. Whether raising funds for life-changing wishes or dedicating thousands of hours to community service, Belmont Abbey's student-athletes continue to exemplify the values of leadership, compassion, and service. Year after year, SAAC and the entire student-athlete community demonstrate a commitment to making a lasti BAC impact on those around them.



Students, faculty, and staff get "pied for a cause!"

An Address by Abbot-Bishop Leo M. Haid, O.S.B. for the laying the cornerstone of Mary Help Abbey Cathedral



Our Lady Help of Christians Basilica has been at the heart of campus faith life since its construction in the 1890s.

The Work *We* Have Begun

AS WE CELEBRATE BELMONT ABBEY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY as a college and a monastery, we are also revisiting our pictorial history, ***Blessing the Years to Come***, last published in 1999. By next Founders' Day, we hope to release an updated version, offering insight into key figures of Abbey history and bringing our text up to date with the events of the past twenty-six years - years of great historical significance in themselves.

We look forward to sharing the finished product with you soon, but in the meantime we hope you enjoy a bit of Abbey history right here, as we share excerpts from a speech Abbot Leo Haid delivered at the laying of the basilica cornerstone in 1892.

BY LAURA SCHAFFER
Editor

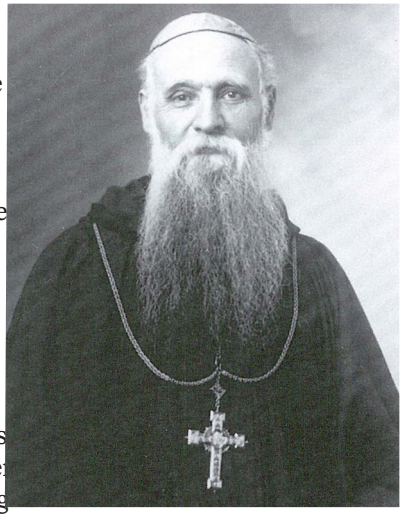


SCAN THE QR CODE to explore the original *Blessing the Years to Come*

4 May 1892

We have all ardently longed for this day. Six years ago it was the fourth of May — I remember it well — we laid the cornerstone for the new college. All was dark then and uncertain; we threw ourselves into the arms of God, and Providence was kind to us. Year after year the community increased and other buildings were erected, and besides working for our own needs, we looked farther south — to the land of flowers — Florida — where there was no Catholic college, and though we were ourselves hard pressed for men and means, yet we divided the little we had to save souls elsewhere. The Benedictine spirit is not selfish but generous and self-sacrificing and endeavors to multiply its efforts to do good to all. God blessed our poor efforts in Florida also and today "Saint Leo's" on the lake is the home of piety and education. All along we worked and prayed that a still holier desire of our hearts should be realized. ... [We] prayed and worked that He might enable us to build Him [t]emple. Today we [a]n to realize the [f]ulfillment of our [h]opes — today we lay [t]he cornerstone of the [c]hurch, and [a]s we know and [f]eel that it will fall short [o]f what we would gladly do, yet we also feel that it is the best our poverty will permit us to undertake; and hence we are filled with gladness and will watch every stone and brick until we meet under its lofty arches to welcome our Redeemer in His real presence in its sacred precincts.

Yet for other reasons, too, the



Abbot Leo Haid served as bishop for all North Carolina until the creation of the Raleigh Diocese.

abbey church is dear, not only to the Catholics and their friends in the immediate vicinity but to the whole State. The providence of God has destined this abbey and college to be the centre of Catholicity in North Carolina. To Saint Mary's College will be sent the sons of our people, especially from the Southern States where our holy religion is least known and has the least means of unfolding her beauty before the eyes of her children in the grandeur of her glorious ritual. Hither, too, the young ladies will come to the Sacred Heart Academy, just building ... All will assemble in this abbey church, ... and all will be better, more earnest, more faithful Catholics because of the advantages this sacred edifice will have afforded them.

The church, therefore, will be the common joy and pride of all our people — no matter where they may be scattered through the State. Still more, the greatest drawback to Catholicity in North Carolina has been the want of earnest, zealous, learned, self-sacrificing priests. No matter how great the efforts of those who labored for God, their number was too small to do His work efficiently. Saint Mary's is to supply this dreadful want. Yes, here in our midst, under the eye of the bishop — in the care of religious who labor only for heavenly things — here the future priests of North Carolina will be educated in all knowledge human and divine; here they will be trained to do battle for God and His kingdom.

How fit then, it is, that especially they should be brought up in the shadow of God's sanctuary, surrounded by all that can increase their reverence for religion, increase their zeal, increase their love for the beauty of God's house!...
Not only will they see these sacred ceremonies, but take part therein and thus make the spiritual life of the Church a part of their own lives. But to me — a monk before I was either priest or bishop — this church is doubly dear because it will resound with the prayers of men dedicated wholly to God in the monastic state. Day after day, ere the sun gilds our mountain tops, the voice of prayer will be raised to God in this church; day after day when darkness and silence cover the earth the same voice will praise our good God! Some people only love and value or tolerate monks for what they can do in active life--as tillers of the soil, learned men, artists, teachers, and pastors of souls. I love them more for what they do immediately for God — for their quiet lives of prayer and meditation! This is the first and greatest ideal striven after by those who founded them — by the Church who has nourished and loved them as her special, most dutiful children. If then all have reason to rejoice today, surely our joy — children of Saint Benedict that we are — should be greatest, because we know that our labor and prayers in erecting this abbey church will build a house of prayer especially for those whose lives are altogether dedicated to God.
May then Heaven bless our work! *Ut in omnibus glorifecitur Deus* is our motto. The initials are on the cornerstone. May God be glorified in all our lives, and especially in the church we begin to erect to Him this day.
May our holy Father Saint Benedict, whose children built so many grand edifices in the fourteen hundred years of their existence, look down. with favor on our humble efforts. May our dear lady — to whom this abbey and college are dedicated — Our Lady, Help of Christians, be our help and stay in the work we have today begun. Am BAC

— Belmont Abbey Archives



Today the Abbey helps to educate our Charlotte Diocese seminarians, carrying on Abbot Haid's vision.

The Faces *of* Belmont Abbey





THIS PHOTO COLLAGE APPEARED IN THE 1976 centennial issue of *Spire*, the Belmont Abbey College yearbook. Today, as we commemorate 150 years, we take the opportunity to look back at old friends, grateful for the things we share and the ways we continue to grow.

Dr. Mike McLeod, Professor, Biology and Biochemistry



Simon Donoghue, Former Director of the Abbey Players





Fr. Chris Kirchgessner, OSB, Professor, Theology

150 Years Dedicated to You

Three Abbey legends approach a century and a half of service

BY LAURA SCHAFFER | *Editor*

FOR 150 YEARS, BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE has educated young men and women in the liberal arts and sciences, that in all things God may be glorified.

Thousands of students have traversed Abbey Lane, looked out the rippled glass of Grace Auditorium, and stepped inside the reverent quiet of Mary Help of Christians Basilica. Thousands of young men and women have found a home here at Belmont Abbey, carrying their exceptional liberal arts formation out into the world, prepared not only to excel professionally but also to seek the good life, to know the truth, and to love the beautiful. In recognition of the many faculty who have so incalculably impacted our students over the past century and a half, in this Sesquicentennial Anniversary issue of the Belmont Abbey Magazine, we honor three men whose collective years of student impact approach 150 years: Simon Donoghue, Dr. Mike McLeod, and Fr. Chris.We invite you to explore their stories here, remembering all that they've done for this community for almost a century and a half. And this October, we hope you will join us in celebrating their accomplishments at a special Homecoming event, "150 Years of Impact."

SCAN THE QR CODE to register for *Homecoming 2026* and check out the event schedule, including our 150th anniversary tribute to Simon Donoghue, Dr. McLeod, and Fr. Chris!



Honoring Simon Donoghue

The Show Goes On

"IF YOU WORK FOR THE ABBEY PLAYERS, they give you scope," Simon Donoghue said, his face folding from deadpan into the singular, signature grin that generations of Abbey Players have come to know and love. *Editor* Scope. It was the perfect word, and he knew it.

BY LAURA SCHAFFER

Scope, after all, captures not just the resourcefulness of Abbey Players through the years - as they face creative challenges and master a wide variety of skills - but also the breadth of experience they still explore and express each semester on stage. No wonder there's such a culture of resilience and humor in the Belmont Abbey Performing Arts.

It was my pleasure to interview Simon in the weeks before he received his Lifetime Achievement Award. Here is a small part of what I learned that day about this kind and extraordinary man.

Simon Donoghue came to Belmont Abbey to discern monastic life. Entering the monastery after graduating from the University of Virginia, he made Simple Vows in 197 and remained in discernment with th community until 1978.

What began as a young man discerni religious life would remain a vocatio though the path would unwind in unexpected ways as Simon brought h considerable and attentive energy, hi creativity, and his responsive care to campus community. It would lead hi marriage, and to a different kind of se than he envisioned on arrival in 1974.

Over the years, Simon's many roles at the Abbey have included reference librarian; professor of Theatre Arts; Chair of the Faculty





ABOVE: Simon receives his Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2026 Celebration of the Arts. (Left to right) Christopher, Debbie, and Simon Donoghue, Gary Sivak and Kristin Hayes. LEFT: Simon and actor, Katherine Goforth, in Wings.

"May God bless us out here and help us do the very best that we possibly can. And help us make whatever we're about to do make this show the best show it can possibly be." — **Abbey Players Cast & Crew**

Assembly; instructor of History, Germ
Great Books; founding editor of the
monastery's Crescat publication; arch
and Interim Library Director. Howev
almost five decades he served as Dire
the Abbey Players speak to his greate
Belmont Abbey legacy: as a teacher, r
friend, and inspiration to generations
students.



Alongside legends like Frs. John Oetgen and Paschal Baustein - both of whom were close personal friends and mentors - Simon Donoghue has taken his place as an Abbey Players icon.

Early years

Simon's relationship with his wife, Debbie, itself hearkens back to Abbey theater. While on a monastic visit to St. Gertrude's, a Richmond Benedictine high school, Simon had noticed the young woman who swept onstage at the end of *7 Nuns in Las Vegas*. And when Debbie auditioned for Anastasia as an Abbey undergraduate the next year, he recognized the commanding mother superior.

Debbie was a dynamo. She led Student Government, became the first female Student of the Year, and danced through every *Friday Night Thing* in original dresses sewed the day of the party. After *Anastasia* rehearsal one night, Simon told his college roommate, "I have no intention of leaving the monastery, but I have the weirdest feeling I'm going to marry that woman." Five years later, Debbie walked to the basilica in a wedding dress she'd made herself, and she and Simon were married. Christopher was born a year and a half later.

Prior to Simon's tenure, the theatre temporarily occupied St. Leo's ground floor. With Grace Auditorium condemned and crumbling overhead, the Abbey Players had salvaged the original (1904) lighting board, uprooted the auditorium chairs, and erected a stage. They'd spray-painted paint cans and used them to rig lights. And sometimes they'd make stage exits out the window.

A new theatre

By 1979, three years after Abbot Jude Cleary asked Simon to be the Abbey Players' Director, the theatre had relocated to the Haid. And while 1987 would see a full renovation, in the meantime the Abbey Players continued practicing resourcefulness. They built a 3-foot stage with a screen behind it, stacked chairs between performances, and even painted unclaimed objects black to appropriate them for theatrical use. In the end, makeshift space never phased the Abbey Players, who dove into everything from *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Simon's musical directorial debut) to *Follies*, and from Fr. Paschal's original adaptation of *Come Rack, Come Rope* to the musical *Godspell* or Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Fr. Paschal inspired a Shakespearean series and continually challenged students and Simon alike to shatter their comfort zones. Today, the same joyful, creative ambition remains an Abbey Players hallmark, cultivating a vibrant campus culture which, under Simon's leadership, has extended to include members of the external community, further enriching student experience and expanding performing local arts networks. Simon also played a vital role in establishing the performing arts as a recognized academic department at Belmont Abbey College, with majors, minors, and a premier scholarship named for Fr. John Oetgen.

If you ask Simon about his story, you'll inevitably hear more about student and colleague accomplishments than about his own, a fact which perfectly underscores the profound sincerity, kindness, tenacity, and generosity that has impacted so many community members throughout his nearly 50 years as Director of the Abbey Players. Belmont Abbey Performing Arts continue to thrive under the leadership of Kristin Hayes, Chair of the Performing Arts Department, and Christopher Donoghue, Director of the Abbey Players. That students with diverse views and backgrounds continue to build flourishing community on the Abbey stage is, in no small part, thanks to Simon Donoghue's legacy. "Theater opens people up," Simon notes. It gives them scope.

Simon as the Doge of Venice in the Abbey Players' production of Othello.

SCAN THE QR CODE to support the arts on campus and help renovate the Haid! A gift of $750 will replace one of the old theatre seats and add an optional, commemorative plaque in honor of a loved one or a former Abbey Player, living or deceased.



The Science *of* Lifelong Learning

Honoring Dr. Mike McLeod

ANYONE WHO HAS STEPPED FOOT into the Willia Gaston Science Building in the last 50 or so odd years has probably heard the **DR. ABIGAIL** ringing baritone of Dr. Michael **COUSINO** (Mike) McLeod lecturing on Cell Biology... and trembled at the knees. Known for banging his fist down on the desk to snap his students back to attention, Dr. McLeod has been the gauntlet every biology student must survive to prove his or her mettle.

Asst. Professor of Biology and Biochemistry



Mike and the Biology Department Honor Society Chapter adopt a stretch of road, just off campus.



Mike and Dr. Sheila Reilly, Emerita Professor of Biology, take to the stage in the Taming of the Shrew.

Dr. McLeod graduated with his Bachelor of Science in biology in 1969. He then served in the military from 1970-1974, during which time he also completed his Master of Science in biology. He then continued his education, earning his Ph.D. in zoology from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1977.
Belmont Abbey College hired Dr. McLoed to help rebuild the Biology Department in 1978. Along with two of his colleagues, Betty Baker and Eunice Cronin, the three built the department from the ground up.

A career begins

Prof. McLeod made his way through the ranks, earning full professorship in 1986. While continuing to teach at the Abbey, he also served as an American Council on Education Fellow and Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, SC from 1987-1988. From 1988-1991 he was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at Belmont Abbey, and in the summers of 1990 and 1992 he served as the Acting and Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, respectively.

In the summer of 1993, he served as the Interim VP of Student Affairs, and from 1991-1995 he was the Director of the Adult Degree Program as well as the Director of the Weekend College, both programs focused on continuing education for non-traditional students.
Continuing the impressive overlap of duties and responsibilities, from 1991-2001 he served as Associate VP for Academic Affairs and from 1995-2000 as the VP for Student Life and Dean of Students.
Exemplifying his dedication to both science and education, McLeod has published over 20 first author papers and coauthored several more, publications which have been cited over 600 times on ResearchGate. His papers cover topics spanning from the early evolution of chili peppers to education at a Liberal Arts College to Pearl Harbor; his impressive breadth of knowledge and curiosity speaks to his role as an academic and a lifelong learner.

Local service

Dr. McLeod is committed to community outreach and growth, serving on the Gaston County Urban Water Quality Committee (1996-1998), the Voices and Choices Regional Environmental Planning Committee (1999-2001), the Centrolina Council of Governments Catawba River Corridor Study Steering Committee (1994), the Dropout Prevention Task Force, and much more.
In 2009 he served on a panel for the North Carolina Health Professions Advisors Association, advising pre-medicine students. He has also presented to the Gaston County Community many times, discussing topics such as water supply protection legislation, environmental issues, energy, and peak oil.

Department leadership

Dr. McLeod has been awarded several grants for the development of math and science programs. Under McLeod's leadership, the biology department received over $600,000 in grants, with the latest Cannon grants allowing for the renovation of the general biology lab in 2017 and 2019.
From 2006-2018 Dr. McLeod served as the Chair of the Department of Biology and from 2002 to the present he has been the Director of the Environmental Science Program. From 2017- 2018 he also served as Chair of the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. He has earned many awards and honors, including the Adrian Faculty Excellence Award, which he received in both 2006 and 2021, and the Spirit of St. Benedict Award in 2008.

Joy of 50 years

Mike has been married to his wife Dianne for 53 years, and their daughter, Jessica, who earned her Ph.D. in anthropology, serves on the development staff at Westen Michigan University. He loves traveling and has been to all 7 continents and all 50 states. His latest adventure took him to Antarctica, where he got to practice his wildlife photography skills. He played the bagpipes for many years in Ceol na Gael Irish Pipe Band and acted in several Abbey Player performances, with his favorite role as Prince Escalus in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Dr. McLeod strives to offer rigorous courses to prepare students for graduate education or a job. He has been the soul of the department for many years, carrying on beloved traditions, such as Deck the Deer, Senior Night, Senior Brunch, and many more! He can often be found whistling or singing as he preps for labs, and he's always ready to tell a story about past students or explain the citric acid cycle and the flow of blood through the heart. He cares deeply for the Abbey, the Biology Department, and most importantly, his students. The Abbey has been blessed to have such a great man and teacher dedicate 48 ye BAC of



Mike prepares to mark the end of a Cross Country race with a rousing tune on the bagpipes.



Fr. Chris and Br. Chrysostom visit the dugout at Abbey Yard.

Honoring Fr. Chris Kirchgessner

The Gift *of* a Lifetime

ALLISON SIMMONS '26
BAC Marketing Intern

FATHER CHRISTOPHER, O.S.B. grew up in New Albany, Indiana, the second of six children. He was raised Catholic, and the Church and the parish school were very influential in the life of his family, but the thought of becoming a priest did not surface for him until high school, despite the fact that one of the nuns teaching at his primary school offered him a scholarship to a Franciscan minor seminary.

It was his parish priest who first inspired Fr. Chris even to consider the priesthood as a possibility. When his father's work in the tobacco industry brought the family to Durham, NC, Fr. Chris stayed behind to complete his senior year of high school, and it was then that he started thinking more seriously about his vocation. As a way of discerning the priesthood, he attended Saint Meinrad College in Indiana, where the idea began to take on distinct shape.

Over the summers during college, Fr. Chris worked in parishes in the archdiocese. Despite how much he enjoyed this parish work, however, his experience at St. Mein-rad drew him towards the monastic life. Nevertheless, he feared that if he entered St. Meinrad, he would not be able to see his family as much as he would like. So when Fr. Chris became aware that there was a Benedictine monastery in North Carolina, he made plans to visit. "I think

vocations are mysteries," Father refle
had fully intended to pursue parish li
he found himself writing a note to Fr.
Abbey's (then) vocations director. He
not far from his family, where he cou
priestly vocation, serve young people
a monastic community as he felt dra
this also wasn't a calculation. It was a
deepened as Fr. Chris took the next s
of Belmont Abbey. Father entered th
July of 1975.





ABOVE: Fr. Chris walks with students throughout their Abbey years. LEFT: Fr. Chris, Br. Paul, Nicolas de Cardenas, and Fr. David as young monks in the 1980s

Life, service, family

Throughout his years at the Abbey, Fr. Chris has maintained close relationships with his family, joking that his four sisters are like extra mothers: they always know better than he does what's best for him. Before making his vows, as he considered possible names, he



hris has taught, red, and served years. that if another son amed him

his mom and

Christopher. And without telling them, that is the name he chose.

After his ordination in 1980, Fr. Chris began teaching in the theology department, where he has impacted students for decades. During this time he also served for periods as Dean of Students, Prior, and Novice Master, but to this day, he most enjoys finding new ways to encourage each generation of students to consider theology and take their education seriously. "I like the subject, and I like the challenge," says Fr. Chris. "I'll teach for as long as I can." The art of teaching has changed substantially since the beginning of his career, but throughout his years as a professor, Fr. Chris has offered each class his trademark compassion, directness, and humor. "One of the things I really, really like about Belmont Abbey," he notes, "is the close relationship between the monks and the students. You don't see that everywhere. It's a gift that we've been given."

Father stays in touch with many former students, catching up with some of them even weekly. "Mentoring students is just a gift," he says, grateful when these relationships expand to friendships with alumni's growing families. Over the years, he has officiated at many weddings, baptized many children, and even mentored students who have followed their parents to the Abbey, and he remains a cherished friend to many alumni.

In addition to his teaching, with the help of the Benedictine Volunteer Corps (BVC) at St. John's Abbey, Fr. Chris started Belmont Abbey's own BVC, which is now in its fifteenth year. Fr. Chris is still excited to discuss and plan it each summer, always ready to reimag-ine the program to ensure that it thrives. As students bring back their transformative stories, he recognizes a lasting legacy of service, which he hopes will continue for generations.

Reflecting on over fifty years at Belmont Abbey, Fr. Chris notes that monastic life, like other vocations, "is about relationships. Relationships take time, hard work, and prayer. It is about being a family." And it

BAC

a gift.



You can still find Fr. Chris in the classroom, challenging and inspiring new generations of students.

A Testament to Decades *of* Student Impact

BELOW ARE JUST A FEW of the many, many friends and alumni on whom Simon Donoghue, Fr. Chris, and Dr. McLeod have made such a profound impact. Belmont Abbey is deeply grateful for all that these extraordinary men have done for our students and our community. If you would like to thank one or more of these Abbey legends for the role they played in your own life or career, we hope you will join us at a special Homecoming 2026 event in their honor. Help us celebrate their almost 150 cumulative years of service to the Abbey family! **Visit bac.edu/homecoming for more information.**

Simon Donoghue



In his classes, Simon helped pass on the great Liberal Arts tradition, bringing Sondheim, Aquinas, Aristotle, and Jefferson into dialogue with ethnic challenges of our world. Simon's sharing of his experience of discernment in religious life really helped inspire me to discern and cultivate my vocation as a priest and religious. Personally he and his wife Debbie helped me navigate a difficult time in my life after my mother's suicide. I am forever grateful for his willingness to share his personal faith and talent with so many generations of Abbey students.

Fr. Christopher Iwancio

Looking back at my years at The Abbey, the many hours spent in The Haid rehearsing and performing with The Abbey Players under the direction of Simon Dongue are among my happiest memories. Simon helped me become a better actor, develop strong friendships, and more importantly, taught me a valuable lesson regarding faith and leadership which has served me well over my more than 36 years as a priest.

Most Reverend John J. McDermott '85

It is almost impossible for Simon to know how many lives he has impacted. Ask anyone who has worked with him, and they will tell you! He has been a part of my life, and my family's, since I was, I'm guessing, 13 years old and in my first play at Belmont Abbey College. He helped me develop my acting abilities, learn confidence in speaking and performing, and feel a part of the Abbey Players family, even before I was old enough to officially be one. The Abbey Players and Theater Dept. are who and what they are today because of this incredibly dedicated and generous man! There is no one else like Si!!

Roma (Dudko) Grogan '84

I regard it as both a pleasure and a privilege to thank my one-time novitiate confrere and friend of over half a century, Simon Donoghue, for his fidelity and generous contributions to Belmont Abbey College. Although the reason he first came to the Abbey was different from the reason he stayed, Simon and Debbie have been a blessing to our community. In Simon's amazing forty-eight years as Director of the Abbey Players he not only enriched the artistic and cultural life of our college, but equally as important he served as mentor, counselor and director to generations of Abbey Players whose college careers were immeasurably enriched by his guidance.

Abbot Placid Solari, OSB

Fr. Chris Kirchgessner



Fr. Chris, O.S.B. really made me think about theology and faith in such profound ways that continue to influence me to this day. I took as many of his classes as I could because they were so incredible!

Amanda Sloan '09

His mentorship shaped not only my time in college, but the direction of my life beyond Belmont Abbey. Through his guidance and belief in me, I was given the life changing opportunity to serve in Tanzania—an experience that profoundly transformed my perspective, faith, and purpose. With a mix of humor, deep faith, and an unwavering belief in his students, he has a remarkable way of changing lives—often by pushing you further than you ever thought you could go, all while making you chuckle along the way.

Julia (Wright) Monash '19

I've had the privilege of knowing Fr Chris not only as a college teacher and advisor, but also as a lifelong friend. For 43 years, he has been a steady, generous presence in my life and a cherished part of my immediate and extended family. His guidance, integrity, and kindness have shaped both my personal and professional journey in positive ways. I'm deeply grateful for the GIFT of his friendship.

John-Paul Linner '86

On behalf of all of us, his confreres, and of our college community, I am happy to extend to Father Christopher our grateful thanks and appreciation for his fifty years of fidelity to monastic life in our community. He has contributed his talents in important leadership positions in both the monastery and college communities. Most of all he has been, and continues to be, a skillful teacher, mentor and friend for countless numbers of students who have benefitted from his dedicated service.

Abbot Placid Solari, OSB

Dr. Mike McLeod



Dr. Michael McLeod once told me, "It's not about the grade. It's about what you learn." That wisdom has stayed with me, just as his example has shaped Belmont Abbey for 50 years through his devotion to students, colleagues, and the deeper purpose of education: forming lives of character, substance, and service.

Patrick L Sutton, PhD '04

Dr. McLeod set a high bar and expected total dedication! He was always ready to answer questions and provide the necessary support to meet those high standards. While the workload was demanding, the rigorous curriculum provided the perfect foundation for the fast-paced nature of veterinary medicine. The deep dive into complex biological systems and his focus on critical thinking ensured I was fully prepared for the academic demands of vet school. Thank you, Dr. McLeod!

Dr. Liz Kenney, D.V.M '19

Dr. McLeod's cell biology class inspired me to pursue medicine. It showed me how the marvels of the microcosm impact the person. His teaching provided a strong biological foundation, enabling me to become a medical oncologist. His commitment to each student as an individual is unparalleled and has helped many students pursue a unique career path in the biomedical fields. On behalf of all of us, thank you Dr. McLeod!

Dr. Patrick Kuhlman '10

I have known Dr. McLeod and counted him as a friend since we both began our teaching careers at the Abbey in the far-distant year of 1978. A skilled scientist, challenging teacher and talented administrator, Dr. McLeod has not only helped build an excellent Biology Department, but has generously contributed his services as Dean of Students and in the Academic Affairs Office. He has been a loyal colleague and leader in the faculty and a trusted mentor to generations of students. We are blessed that he has made his career at Belmont Abbey College.

Abbot Placid Solari, OSB

Dale Ahlquist Receives # Classical Education *and the Whole Truth* *2026 Benedict Leadership Institute Award*

The mission of the Benedict Leadership Institute is to develop and inspire Catholic leaders to transform society in the light of their faith.

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING authorities on the life, writings, and legacy of G.K. Chesterton, Dale Ahlquist is the co-founder and president of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton and the founder of the Chesterton Schools Network, as well as a bestselling author, broadcaster, and international speaker. Last March, Belmont Abbey and the Benedict Leadership Institute honored him for his profound contributions to the classical education movement.

The following is an excerpt from Dale Ahlquist's acceptance speech at the 2026 Benedict Leadership Institute Awards Banquet:

GK Chesterton... is the complete thinker. He puts it all together.... And if we can create complete thinkers, they're going to be well equipped to start changing this culture....

Chesterton says the one thing that is never taught by any chance in any of our public schools is this: that there is a whole truth of things and that in knowing it and speaking it, we are happy. There's a whole truth of things. We get to teach the whole truth. But not only teach the truth, teach how to speak it because knowing the truth and speaking it is what makes us happy. And if there's anything we need in our young people right now, it's joy. We're living under a whole cloud of depression that's affecting all of our young people. All of you have been touched by some tragedy with a teenager in your circle.

We are the antidote with a culture of life and the gospel of joy. And as more schools keep appearing, Chesterton himself keeps making more appearances. ... Last weekend, Pope Leo the fourteenth quoted Chesterton... He was addressing some Spanish seminarians, and he said that his whole talk could be summed up with one line from GK Chesterton: "Take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural." And I suppose I could sum up my whole talk with that line because, think about it: we've taken the supernatural out of public schools, and we're left with the most unnatural of ideas and philosophies. We've taken God out of public life and public discussion, and so the devil has suddenly rushed in to fill the void, quietly convincing people that evil is good.

I don't think our public schools can be saved. But in the meantime, we're gonna just keep starting new schools that offer the Savior as the center of the curriculum. People sometimes ask me, Dale, what's going to happen? ...As if I know. Chesterton says, "I know as much about the future as you do, which is nothing." But there's only one of two things that can happen: We could continue on the road that we're on and see the complete destruction of our civilization, the complete collapse... or we're going to turn things around and get back on the right road and have a true revival, a spiritual revival, and start achieving great heights in a culture built with truth, goodness, and beauty. In either case, our work is exactly the same. It doesn't matter which is going to happen on the big scale; what we do at the local scale remains the same.

We are just like Saint Benedict, who rebuilt civilization after the fall of Rome. And I'm honored to receive this award and to be part of the work of carrying on Saint Benedict's work in the new dark ages. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. BAC











“150 Years of Impact” Celebration

Fr. Chris’ Golden Jubilee

Plus:

- Welcome Back Cookout
- Class of ‘76 Reunion
- Oktoberfest on the Lawn
- Historical Archives Walk
- Men and Women’s Soccer and Field Activitiesand Field Activities
- President’s Breakfast and College UpdateCollege Update
- Color Run
- Mass in memory of veterans and deceased veterans and deceased alumni alumni
- Farewell Continental Breakfast Breakfast
- And more...

RSVP Today!

Scan or visit bac.edu/homebac.edu/coming26coming26

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE 150th ANNIVERSARY



Joe Graham's years of service continue to bear fruit in his students' lives and careers to this day.

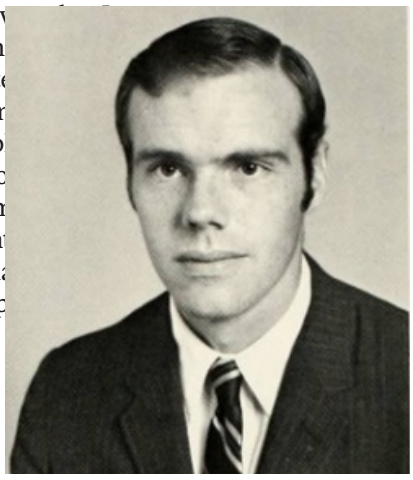
The Legacy of Beloved Professor and Alumnus Joe Graham

Ongoing Impact

AT A BELMONT ABBEY EVENT IN QUEENS, NY, I recently overheard one alumnus telling another about his freshman year. He had entered as an environmental science major, but by the end of the first semester, he'd been failing out, **BY JOHN KEATING** and his dad had been ready to drag him back to New Jersey. So he decided to switch majors and take an accounting class to salvage his college career. "This one professor, Joe Graham... let me into his class. He warned me that it was going to be hard, but that if I put in the work, it would be worth it. It sure was. He was an amazing teacher. He got me through my four years."

Director of Major Gifts for Athletics

What's poignant about this exchange w
Graham's name had come up twice th
already, in unrelated and uncoordinate
conversations. In one, an alumnus don
major gift to the college with the simp
that we honor his accounting professo
process. Another highlighted his dilem
whether to pursue grad school straigh
college. A conversation with Joe Graha
helped to solve it and left a lasting imp



Joe as an Abbey senior in 1971.

God willing, many of us have had at least ONE professor, priest, pastor, friend or coach along the way whose influence contributed meaningfully to the type of people we've become. We don't always know it at the time. And not all are so lucky. But among the Belmont Abbey College business majors of the 1970s, Professor Joseph Graham was that profound and positive influence for countless students.

An Abbey graduate himself, Professor Graham is a quiet, humble man with a gentle presence. Mentored upon arrival by Professor JP Smith, head of the accounting department and college CFO, Joe graduated in 1971, took the CPA exam, and entered graduate school. Impressed by his abilities as a student, Smith recruited Graham to return to the Abbey and teach. For a period of years, Joe survived on minimal sleep, attempting to find balance as a college accounting professor and full-time assistant business manager (both at Belmont Abbey), all while earning his MBA from Winthrop University!

During his decade at the Abbey, Joe wore many hats and contributed meaningfully to college life beyond the classroom, working with student aid, academic affairs, and long-range planning. He chaired the first faculty senate at the Abbey and helped draft that body's first constitution. He was even yearbook advisor for a year. His career took him from the Abbey to Wingate University where he spent the next several decades developing curriculum, implementing that school's MBA and MAC (Master of Accounting) programs, participating in two dozen university committees, and serving as dean of the business school. In 1992 he received that college's prestigious Corts Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Bryan Rogers '77 is one of the Abbey students who benefitted from this professor's giftedness and inspiration. After graduation Rogers went on to the Wharton School of Business and a highly successful investment management career, which led to managerial roles at Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse and Wells Fargo. Rogers remembers Professor Graham fondly: "Joe was demanding but very supportive and an excellent mentor to me and many of my accounting major colleagues. Joe always had a knack for lifting his students." Rogers is not alone in his praise for Joe Graham. Though he is certainly not the first nor the last professor here at the Abbey to leave a mark on students, this college is certainly blessed to have enjoyed Professor Joseph Graham during its storied 150 year journey.

Abbey Lane Update

CLASS NOTES

1990s

» **AARON CONDON '99**
Aaron recently received the rank of Professor at Forsyth Technical Community College. He is now both Program Coordinator and Professor of their IT-Information Systems degree program, while also serving on the Conference Committee for the National Association for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) as Volunteer Subcommittee Chair. In May he spoke at the NISOD Conference in Austin, TX. His topic was: "Building Community Organization/Business Connections: Strategies for Information Technology Capstone Course Speakers and Experiential Learning Tours."

2000s

» **LAURA MYERS '09**



Laura retired in 2024 after a long, fruitful career in Information Technology at large financial institutions. After graduating from the Abbey, she received an MS in Management and Leadership from Montreat College, and last May she also completed a master's certificate in Theology Studies at Liberty University.

2010s

» **GAYLE (WARNER) DOBBS '11**
Gayle moved to Waxhaw to be closer to family in October 2025. Her husband John passed away in December 2022, and she felt it was time to move. Now she lives in a community of "55 and Over," at Encore at Streamside, and there are so many things to do there!



ALEXANDRIA (JUDA) LAFOND '16 STARTS FAITH-BASED BUSINESS

ALEXANDRIA AND HER HUSBAND MITCH LAFOND have started their own faith-based Fitness and Nutrition Company called **The Metanoia Method.** They help to guide men and women toward lasting strength and wellness through intentional training, disciplined living, and faith-centered growth.



» **MICHAEL '14 and KARA '15 (MICHAELS) BECKER**
Michael and Kara welcomed a new baby, little Sophia, in June 2025.

» **BRITTENY (SHEPARD) HERNANDEZ '15**
Britteny got married after graduation, and she now has a two-year-old daughter and is teaching high school History and English.

» **KEVIN '15 AND CAITLIN '15 (CLANCY) LOTRUGLIO**
Kevin and Caitlin welcomed their twins Mary Celine Immaculata and Ambrose Thaddeus Cyrus in February.

2020s

» **BRIAN GIRARD '20**
Brian matched with General Surgery at Kansas University, Wichita in March.

HAVE YOU RETIRED? MARRIED? Traveled somewhere exciting? Taken on a new job or welcomed a new baby? We'd love to hear from you! To be featured in the next issue of Belmont Abbey College Magazine, please email your life updates to **collegerelations@ bac.edu**

IN MEMORIAM JANUARY-MAY 2026

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

» DR. JONATHAN EVANS

Belmont, NC
April 8, 2026



The Belmont Abbey College community mourns the loss of Dr. Jonathan Evans, beloved member of our Sports Management faculty, who passed away on April 8, 2026. A generous and passionate teacher, his enthusiasm, joy, and dedication were a continual gift to his colleagues and students, and we are profoundly grateful for him and for his lasting impact on this community. He will be deeply missed.



Jonathan's brother, Jeff; father, Jim; and step-mother, Diane, rest on the bench they are dedicating to his memory.

» FR. JAMES SOLARI

High Point, NC
May 15, 2026



With sadness at his passing and profound gratitude for his service to our community and our diocese, Belmont Abbey College mourns the passing of Fr. James Solari on May 15, 2026. Brother of Abbot Placid Solari, OSB, Fr. James was a member of the monastic community, a theology professor, and academic dean at Belmont Abbey before discerning the call to serve as a diocesan priest. His joyful and dedicated service to the Charlotte Diocese continued long after retirement from active ministry, leaving a broad and profound impact both within and beyond the Belmont Abbey College family. Together with parishioners across the diocese and friends and alumni throughout our Abbey community, we will warmly cherish his memory.

» JERRY BARLOWE '56
Edgewater, FL
February 16, 2026

» JOHN (JACK) CABREY '63
Beaufort, SC
April 12, 2026

» JOSEPH COYLE '57
Greensboro, NC
February 11, 2026

» THOMAS CUNNING '70
Lewisville, NC
February 26, 2026

» PHILIP DETURK '52
Southern Pines, NC
February 6, 2026

» JAMES DIETSCH
Baltimore, MD
March 31, 2026

» GEORGE FLEMING
Charlotte, NC
January 16, 2026

» SHEPARD HENDERSON FOLEY '64
Charlotte, NC
March 19, 2026

» THEODORE "TED" HAWLEY, JR. '68
Hamlet, NC
January 10, 2026

» DAVID HOLLEY '73
Portsmouth, VA
March 26, 2026

» JAMES HYLAND '71
Rock Hill, SC
February 19, 2026

» CHERYL (STONE) ILDERTON
Sullivans Island, SC
March 14, 2026

» JOHN JOSEY
Kannapolis, NC
January 31, 2026

» SR. MARILYN KING
Belmont, NC
April 8, 2026

» STEPHEN L'ETOILE '74
Warrenton, VA
February 24, 2026

» MARJORIE MCDERMOTT
Newport, NC
April 6, 2026

» JIM MELVIN '57
Richmond, VA
March 15, 2026

» DR. EDWARD OLSEN '71
Red Bank, NJ
March 23, 2026

» KATHLEEN O'NEIL
January 28, 2026
Powhatan, VA

» DR. JOSEPH PERRY '57
Pensacola, FL
April 9, 2026

» LEONARD PHILEMON '77
Charlotte, NC
February 2, 2026

» ALBERT PRUD'HOMME '75
Lexington, SC
March 7, 2026

» EDWARD RANA
Pawleys Island, SC
March 29, 2026

» GEORGE SEARGEANT '72
Pipe Creek, TX
March 20, 2026

» PAUL ZINGG '68
Chico, CA
April 9, 2026

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE 150th ANNIVERSARY

100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Rd.
Belmont, NC 28012 bac.edu



Belmont Abbey alumni make the world a better place...

Form a new generation of leaders in the faith-filled hallmarks of the Benedictine tradition.

Transform students into the nurses, teachers, priests, business leaders, and community members who, in turn, change lives.

In honor of our 150 years of student impact, service to the Church, and care for our communities, we invite you to make a gift supporting Belmont Abbey College.

Give today!

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE 150th ANNIVERSARY