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Those of you who follow *Quaker Higher Education* religiously will have observed that there has been no issue since fall of 2020. As in so many things these days, blame the pandemic. It should not surprise anyone engaged in education that doing anything that was not required was a task that got set aside. This applied to both the editors of *QHE* and to its contributors. This issue of *QHE* has therefore been dedicated to experience and ruminations on teaching during the pandemic restrictions. As one might expect there are many lessons learned, some lessons from the past that were refined and extended, and some efforts that were made more difficult by institutional circumstances. The following essays describe the experience of the contributors.

In her new book *Crisis Leadership* (Morehouse Press, 2021) Margaret Benefield maintains that crises should be seen as opportunities. Her contribution to this issue is an excerpt from her book in which she describes how the Shalom Institute, which she leads, used the restrictions of the pandemic as an opportunity for self examination and to motivate ‘new things under the sun’.

Ada S Jaarsma, assistant professor of **** at Mount Royal University, extols the virtues of flexibility in the curriculum required by remote learning. She examines in particular the opportunity to include material not normally included in classroom instruction and to forgo the potentially stiltifying effects of traditional classroom evaluation.

Alex Altes, theater teacher at Westtown School and PHD candidate at New York University, describes how a tool developed as an experiment was adapted for use in remote learning. He goes on to describe its use in that medium allowed for its refinement, and how it met the needs of particular students that might not have been as well served by traditional methods.

Steven Pottoff, professor of religion at Wilmington College, speaks to the personal difficulties of teaching a subjects which needs personal engagement. In particular, he describes how it was possible to use the study of religion to put the travails of the pandemic in historical social context and to identify the kind of faith that avoids ‘catastrophizing’.

Donald Smith, professor of physics at Guilford College, describes the problems dealing simultaneously with institutional disfunction and teaching challenges. He observes the surprising effects on the teacher (himself) when not able to make ‘eye contact’ with the students themselves.

Wendy L Looker, professor of music at Guilford College, describes the efforts necessary to manage preparing a choir. The result was new skills, and a new way to make a concert. She affirms however that this is not a replacement for performance even if it does allow for outreach to and inclusion of community members. A result of that work, *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*, is included in this issue both as an embedded object and as a link to a cloud file.

FAHE wishes to gratefully acknowledge the work of Paul Moke of Wilmington College who served as principle editor of *QHE* for the last several years. He asked to be relieved of the editorship at this last year’s virtual conference and we will miss his carefull planning and editing.

Also, unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise this summer, this will be the last issue of *QHE*. The **Quakers in the Disciplines** volumes and the discussion list on the website serve the purposes for which this journal was originally instituted. With the break due to the pandemic this seems the time to lay it down. Thus, the musical offering seemed to the *QHE* staff a fitting last piece.

Crisis Leadership

Margaret Benefiel

“Don’t waste a good crisis,” admonished Winston Churchill during World War II. A crisis suspends the status quo and makes possible what wasn’t possible before. A crisis reveals ways of operating that worked in the past, but which are no longer relevant in the new circumstances. At the Shalem Institute, where I serve as executive director, we wondered what we might be able to do in the crisis of COVID-19 that we hadn’t been able to do before. We wondered which of our old ways needed to be shed in the new circumstances. We knew the Chinese character for “crisis” meant both “danger” and “opportunity.” What was the opportunity hiding in this crisis for us? What was the danger? We continued to dive deep and listen, going beneath preoccupation with our own fears and discomfort to the bedrock of God’s abiding presence and guidance. We waited and listened and watched....

In the end, the crisis of COVID-19 allowed us to break through barriers that had confined us: expanding the Group Spiritual Direction program, doing significant leadership development and expanding and diversifying our team of program leaders, manifesting the next incarnation of a program for personal spiritual growth, moving our files to the cloud, making the Shalem Society gathering of program graduates affordable and accessible, and strengthening working relationships within our administrative staff, not limited by geography.

A second crisis, that of police killings and subsequent protests, a time of racial reckoning for our country, put the United States’ original sin of racism front and center. Again, we at Shalem were called to ask, “What is ours to do?” What was the invitation for Shalem in this crisis, both internally and externally? For years Shalem, a predominantly White organization, had been working toward more diversity on its board and staff, with limited success. The time was ripe to work more broadly toward diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We took a number of steps to begin to address this issue. We still have much work to do and we have begun to look at next steps we can take toward diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization. The crisis of police violence and the related protests in the United States have provided Shalem with the opportunity to step up and do our work. This second crisis allowed us to break through our complacency as a White organization and name the ways that we were complicit in racism and begin to take steps to become

more anti-racist. We have begun a long journey, and I pray that we will have the courage and perseverance to continue.

The admonition to “not waste a good crisis” has served us well. Crises provide important opportunities. May we all have eyes to see the invitations contained within them.

*This article is an excerpt from **Crisis Leadership** by Margaret Benefiel, adapted and used with permission of the publisher (Morehouse Publishing, 2021).*

Pandemic Pedagogy

Ada S. Jaarsma

“Flexibility,” which is a tenet of universal design, became more of a Quaker ideal for me this year, especially in terms of commitments to peace and prison abolition. I’d long embraced universal design in learning as a key, if at times contested,ⁱ framework for teaching-practices.ⁱⁱ In this context, flexibility as an ideal can guide our reflections on how things might be done otherwise in our courses, including things that we’ve long thought are carved in stone, so that students can connect with the material in vibrant, ease-filled ways.

I love this ideal, *flexibility*, because it seems to account simply for what we ourselves long for as we go about our professional lives as teachers, as students, as staff, as members of community. We long for others to assume the best of us, to trust that we will approach our commitments with integrity; and, this means that we want to be met with flexibility when there are barriers or discomforts that block us from engaging with tasks as fully as we want to. Maybe we need more time, so that we can accomplish something with our best efforts. Maybe a task itself can be amended, so that we can draw on our capacities well, instead of wrestling to fit ourselves into activities that don’t align with our abilities.

It makes existential sense, given that we welcome gifts of flexibility from others when we need them in our own lives, to want to proffer these to students as we design our lessons, assess assignments, and facilitate conversations with students.

It’s striking, then, how difficult it can be to cultivate flexibility as an ethos for teaching. One reason has to do with the very fact that our teaching practices are honed, over time. (Gert Biesta calls this

the “educational artistry” that each of us develops, in our own ways.ⁱ) Along these lines, flexibility elicits creativity from instructors because it begs some beautiful questions about why we do the things we do, as teachers. Perhaps we can expand or change our methods, so that students can enjoy more flexibility in our courses. One challenge here is receiving and responding to concrete feedback from students. Another challenge is building openness to feedback into our course designs so that students can tell us when flexibility is needed.

A particular reason for flexibility became more recognizable to me this year, as we all transitioned to online teaching, through the increasing surveillance-practices that emerged across North American universities. Some students were told that they had to buy and then install cameras, if they didn’t already have them, so that unseen professors could watch them as they concentrated on exam-taking in their own homes. Some schools invested in corporate proctoring programs to secure a similar kind of scrutiny.ⁱⁱ

Such increasing surveillance of students reflects existing trends of encroachment by for-profit technology companies on higher education.ⁱⁱⁱ They also reflect longstanding academic anxieties and fears, which Susan Blum diagnosed years ago as entirely misplaced, about plagiarism.^{iv} The reactions to this pandemic-pivot to cameras and anonymous proctors, in other words, can serve as feedback loops for us, prompting reflection upon the degrees to which we might have internalized such patterns in our other teaching-practices.

I’d always considered carceral pedagogies as punishment-oriented, but I am beginning to reflect on these kinds of surveillance practices as essentially carceral in nature, at odds with commitments to work for prison abolition at the heart of many Quaker communities.^v Flexibility, as an ethos, hinges in part on *anticipating* the best from others and also from ourselves. We can extend this good-will into our own teaching practices.

“Pandemic pedagogy,” in this way, can be an invitation to suffuse our course designs, curriculum, assignments, and modes of assessment with anti-carceral and prison-abolitionist commitments. This will put us at odds with some entrenched dynamics at our institutions, but it will likely afford more opportunities for feedback from students, since they will be met with openness instead of surveillance.

Flexibility became a necessity this year, as we each searched for ways to convert our courses into

virtual delivery. Perhaps flexibility will become, in turn, one of the ongoing gifts of this difficult year.

ⁱ See Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

ⁱⁱ Ada S. Jaarsma, “Critical Disability Studies and the Problem of Method,” *Transdisciplinary Feminist Research Practices*. Ed. Carol A. Taylor, Christina Hughes, and Jasmine B. Ulmer (Routledge, 2020), 16-28.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gert Biesta, *World-Centred Education: A View for the Present* (Routledge, 2021), vii.

^{iv} <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/04/01/online-proctoring-college-exams-coronavirus/>;

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/11/online-proctoring-surg-ing-during-covid-19>

^v <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/is-online-test-monitoring-here-to-stay>

^{vi} Susan D. Blum, *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

^{vii} My own Quaker community, Canadian Yearly Meeting, is celebrating its 40th anniversary of committing to abolitionist principles and practices. <https://quakerconcern.ca/40th-anniversary-of-minute-on-prison-abolition/>. John Samson Fellows drew our attention to this celebration during our CYM gathering in August 2021.

A Quakerly Way of Collective Reading in the Classroom

Alex Ates,

The tool for collective reading outlined in this short essay was developed in my classroom without much intentional forethought. As educators know, improvisational instructional moments can have the potential to be curiously effective. This tool has served my classes effectively in each of the pre-Covid Fall semester of 2019, the online Fall semester of 2020, the hybridized Spring of 2021; and even now in the Covid-variant purgatory. That is to say: this method has proven reliable despite the varying modes of instruction and the settings where it was practiced. So, I believe it’s worth sharing.

When I started teaching at Westtown School, I realized the tool’s reliability could be attributed to its simple reflection of the Quaker spirit of collaborative and ephemeral oration. However, it should be noted that this tool’s Quakerliness is accidental too: it was developed and refined in a class I taught on theater education at The University of Alabama, and while it’s

a natural fit in theater classes, this tool would also work well for any course, ritual, or event where reading aloud makes sense.

When you are ready to read an excerpt, a script, or a poem in your class, explain the following rules:

- Airplane pilots trade the wheel by stating the exact phrase: "I have the flight controls." Such transparent, definitive signaling is essential to our classroom tool. The simple, unobtrusive phrase "my voice" transfers control of the classroom, just like "I have the flight controls" transfers control of a plane.
- The collective reading starts once the class has settled into silence. Then, any student can choose to read at any time. There is no order—no going in a circle or down a line. When any student feels ready to read, they state clearly: "my voice," signaling that they are driving the classroom.
- If two students say "my voice" simultaneously, they can quickly determine who will read. (Curiously, however, this has never happened in my classes).
- When silence arises between speakers, a text gains *ephemeral punctuation*. Embrace the text's new rhythm.
- Once a student takes control, they can read until they feel the urge to stop. Part of this tool encourages students to sense the room and trust their intuition—if plugged into the flow, they'll sense when to pass control of the text. Typically, the novelty of this method pulls students into a group flow. I cannot recall a time when a student monopolized the reading opportunity.
- To keep the voices circulating, after a student reads, they cannot retake control until a certain number of other students have read. The teacher can determine this number and set the buffer between a student's first and second reading strategically or intuitively.
- A confident reader could choose to read a whole paragraph. A nervous reader could speak a sentence or even a word. If a reader

does not know how to pronounce a word, they calmly and plainly state: "word." Encourage the student to avoid placing frustration or embarrassment onto their delivery of "word." (Normalize these possibilities during the instructions so that when they happen, they're neither ironies nor anomalies). Calling for "word" gives the class cohort permission to support with: a) the correct pronunciation, b) the definition, or c) a guess to either a or b. The teacher should avoid jumping in to help. Let the student community provide mutual aid.

A meaningful reading occurred at The University of Alabama during close consideration of Augusto Boal's manifesto, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974). A student expressed an instinctual discomfort with the political implications outlined in the text. In their seat, they squirmed with skepticism as the reading ascended in righteousness. Then, out of a transitional silence, the leery student proclaimed "my voice," and put their voice on the more radical and revolutionary words. As the student read, we could hear them trying to understand the words on the page as they spoke. Afterward, the student wasn't evangelized to the philosophies of Boal—and that wasn't the intention. But, as the dramatist Anna Deavere Smith once noted about her style of interview-based theater: "In the way that you would think about putting yourself in other people shoes, I'm putting myself in other people's words." The student put themselves into Boal's words and it was a humanistic act of inquiry, understanding, and curiosity.

Beautiful things happen when a class utilizes this technique of collective reading. Students with social insecurities surprise themselves (and others) with the confidence of the quaking impulse to jump in. Students who typically hog classroom airtime take a step back. When mispronunciation happens, support replaces shame. But, most notably: moments of beauty emerge. It turns static reading into *a happening*. Words find new meaning within a mosaic of voices. And, as we know from Meeting for Worship, the spark of communication is a mischievous spirit.

From silence, the text will start with someone's voice and end the same way. It's not a race to the text's finish line; it's an assembly line. The path the text takes will remain unknown until its ending, just like life. And when reading is just like life, that means the text is alive.

Works Cited

Deavere Smith, Anna. "Anna Deavere Smith Puts Herself into Other People's Words." *The PBS Newshour*, April 5, 2018. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/brief/246884/anna-deavere-smith>.

Personal Reflections on Challenges Posed by Teaching During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Stephen Potthoff

As it has for all of us engaged in the work of education, teaching during the COVID 19 pandemic has posed challenges on multiple levels—technological, pedagogical and personal. Although Wilmington College has remained committed to providing in-person classes throughout the pandemic, we also had to learn a whole new suite of learning technologies and teaching strategies to prepare for a possible pivot online due to a campus outbreak. Curiously, teaching face-to-face in a distanced classroom has presented many of the same challenges as remote instruction—students and professors must work much harder to feel engaged and connected with each other and the course material.

In many respects, the personal challenges posed by teaching face-to-face during the pandemic have been the most daunting for me. Wilmington College began the fall semester of 2020 almost fully in-person. Though we instituted the normal protocols—masking and six feet of distance in the classroom—mask compliance among students has remained inconsistent at best. Many students had masks that did not fit properly, and/or did not effectively cover nose and mouth. The College did not have regular testing of students through the fall semester, and from my standpoint as a champion catastrophizer, we had all the makings of a major outbreak that might not just shut down in-person learning, but make a large number of people sick—including me.

I chose to deal with these challenges in various ways. First, I had to allay my own anxiety about contracting the virus by acquiring N95 masks to wear in the classroom, and quickly arranged with the Wilmington Yearly Meeting and the College to order enough N95 masks for all front-line folks at the College who

needed and wanted them. In the earlier part of the fall semester 2020, I also held as many of my classes outside as possible. Inside and outside, I ran/run a tight ship: Masks were/are required inside and outside, no eating or drinking in the classroom, etc.

Somewhat to my surprise, the College made it all the way to Thanksgiving week 2020, after which an outbreak following an unauthorized off-campus Halloween party forced us all online for the remaining three weeks of the term. Despite this surprising success in limiting spread for most of the fall 2020, the corona virus eventually caught up to us. After Halloween, more and more students in all of my classes caught the virus and ended up in quarantine. Despite finishing up the term online, however, students for the most part pulled through.

Spring semester 2021 went much better than the fall, partly because, though we started the term in the middle of the winter surge, the College began regular testing of student athletes, which meant that we were able to weather the spring term completely in-person. Masks and distancing were still required, and commencement was in-person but in two separate ceremonies to allow distancing and other measures. Getting vaccinated in the middle of the semester significantly allayed my own ongoing anxiety about the virus.

The fall semester 2021 seems to have brought a whole new set of challenges. We are largely in-person as before, but mask and distancing compliance remain inconsistent. Complicating the more highly contagious nature of the delta variant is the fact that only approximately 35% of our student body is presently fully vaccinated. Continuation of regular testing of student athletes is helping to detect cases, but student case numbers are already ten times higher than this time last fall. Fortunately, the College has approved a vaccine mandate for all students beginning in the spring semester 2022.

In the meantime, however, I am doing my best to encourage, both in-and-outside the classroom, all students to get vaccinated. In my Introduction to the Bible class, I have highlighted the many passages in the Hebrew Bible that feature plague and pestilence, emphasizing that pandemics are a consistent theme in human history. We examine and question the common biblical explanation of disease as a punishment from God, and I point out that vaccines in the last one-hundred years have eliminated multiple diseases that

ended the lives of so many in generations past. In the light of the coronavirus pandemic, the Angel of Death in the Exodus story takes on a compelling new meaning.

One of many bizarre conspiracy theories about the vaccine which circulates widely in my area of the country is that the coronavirus vaccine gives you the “mark of the Beast.” One student shared with me a very professionally-made video he had found which explains that human DNA is imprinted with the very name of God (Yahweh), a name which is satanically contaminated when a person is vaccinated. In Bible class that day, I took the opportunity to address this conspiracy theory by giving some historical and biblical background to generate some discussion analyzing and critiquing the basis of the theory. Though I don’t know how many people I reached who may be afraid of satanic possession from the COVID vaccine, such concerns from students did allow me to address what the mark of the Beast in Revelation 13 actually refers to—probably a tattoo or brand on pagans who were persecuting early Christians for their refusal to worship Roman emperors as gods.

As we move forward at Wilmington in our efforts to vaccinate all members of our College community, I am encouraged by the fact that we are proceeding forward in alignment with our Core Values of Community, Integrity, and Respect for All Persons. When a student asked me after our Bible class discussion about the mark of the Beast why I wore a mask if I believed I was protected by the vaccine, I explained that wearing a mask is something I and all of us should do (according to the science) not merely to protect ourselves, but to protect more vulnerable members of our families and community. As we discussed in my Values and Ethics class last spring, because we are all members of an interconnected community, masks and vaccination are the most important ways we can care for and protect ourselves and all those around us.

Pandemic Reflections

Donald A. Smith

This has been by any measure a unique year. I cannot write about my experiences teaching during the pandemic without reflecting on the financial and

leadership crisis at Guilford College. While we pivoted to online instruction and fought to keep our students healthy and engaged, we discovered that the college’s debt had almost quintupled, the budget was vastly overestimated, and interim administrators sought to eliminate all the liberal arts majors, fire a large portion of the faculty, and replace us with contingent (cheap) teachers, while even modest administrator salary cuts were not even considered. All those crises are woven together in my emotional landscape for the ongoing public health disaster. There have, however, been highlights, and I learned much about myself, why I love my work, and how teaching can be a spiritual calling for spiritual beings, even through the pixels of a Zoom session.

I found that what I value most about teaching is building relationships with the students. This was very difficult through the Zoom interface, but only crossed over into impossible when students refused to turn their cameras on. When I could see faces, I could at least get a feel for whether people were engaged, confused, distracted, or harried. For my upper level classes, where we all knew each other, video conferencing sometimes approached a feeling similar to being in person. We collaborated on mathematical derivations through shared digital whiteboards, we programmed simulations together, and we were able to have free-flowing and productive conversations. While I still missed the physicality of using Physics demonstrations and experiments, we could at least collaborate on the theory through the computer.

Of course, the advanced students and I also already knew each other well. For the introductory courses, students felt uncomfortable turning on video. One student told me something like, “we know that once someone turns their video on, everyone else is going to watch them.” So they hid behind anonymity. Only if almost everyone had their video on could they feel like no one was looking at them. It’s almost like if everyone gets a vaccine, we can all feel safe. Funny, that.... However, I found trying to teach to a screen full of black squares excruciating. I was teaching a general education course about galaxies and cosmology, which are mind-bending topics at the best of times – since I had no idea whether what I was saying was making any sense to them, I found myself getting more and more energetic and loud, but all my energy just vanished into the black hole, leaving me exhausted. I taught a multivariable calculus course in the Fall of 2020, in

which I simply pre-recorded video lectures, and then we used the class time to work through problems together. That worked much better.

I learned that I am a much more physical physics teacher than I thought I was. Being constrained to sit in front of a camera was constrictive. I wanted to confront the students with a mysterious apparatus, I wanted to swing bowling balls around the room, and I wanted the students to metaphorically get their hands dirty. All of that was nearly impossible through the computer screen.

While I struggled to build connections to students through the video screen, my colleagues and I struggled to foster collaboration and forge unity and solidarity through video meetings as well. Trying to fight off a union-busting action and manage the politics of a board of trustees without being able to meet in person was just as difficult. Luckily, the board of trustees pulled back from the brink. Rather than jettison our Quaker heritage and remake the college into something completely different, the alumni, faculty, staff, students, and trustees all pulled together to chart a different course forward for Guilford College. We may yet fail, but all hands are on deck, and we are centering and celebrating what makes us unique, in the hopes that our strengths are sufficient to carry us through this crisis, while we mourn that which we have lost.

How can I Keep from Singing? Silver linings and barriers to choral music during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Wendy Looker

Early on in the pandemic, we learned that singing can be a superspreading activity. Leaders in music education raced to fund aerosol studies and uncover technologies that would allow us to continue providing meaningful musical experiences for our beloved singers. We also worried about the looming potential for job loss for musicians and teachers. I spent the summer of 2020 on **Zoom**, conferencing with colleagues across the country to learn as much as I could about emerging best practices the new reality of online rehearsals and virtual performances.

With funding from a teaching grant, I learned to use **Logic Pro X** and **Final Cut Pro** via **Zoom** lessons with a colleague who is well-versed in the production of virtual choir projects. Throughout the fall of 2020, I never met nor heard the singers in my choir in person. Instead, we created a series of virtual choir videos that were edited together to create a virtual concert event on **Facebook Live**. The preparation for this virtual event was challenging, and both the singers and I learned valuable lessons about recording and storytelling through video.

Before the semester commenced, I designed a Canvas course shell for the College Choir, assigning each song a *module* containing all the materials and assessments necessary to learn that piece. After obtaining licensing rights from the composers or publishers of each piece, I posted PDF scores in each *module*. I also included video performances, recordings and audio tracks for practicing, rehearsing synchronously, and finally, for recording. Preparing practice tracks involves recording a *click track* on **Logic Pro X** using either a midi keyboard, an acoustic piano, or my own voice. Tempo is predetermined when using a practice track; and, while this makes audio mixing infinitely easier, it robs one of some artistic control and the spontaneity of a live performance.

With all the necessary materials posted, we began rehearsing on **Zoom**. Singers have to remain on mute while singing along on **Zoom**. For a number of reasons, there is no way to sing synchronously, so I relied on students asking to review parts as they learned. Occasionally a brave singer would volunteer to sing alone – a rare opportunity to assess learning in real time. Asynchronously, students uploaded assessment recordings made on their smartphones to which I provided feedback via **Canvas**. The focus of our time together in “Zoom rehearsal” often shifted to discussing the meaning of the song text in breakout rooms, looking at imagery and sharing design ideas and creating a storyboard for our video project.

In November, students recorded their videos -- a process that is much more complicated than it sounds. With a camera set in the appropriate position, the singer watches the music on another device, listens to the audio track in one ear only, and sings to the click track. (It is difficult to hear yourself sing with earbuds in both ears), This process was frustrating for many and certainly not as rewarding as communal singing in person. I have however no doubt that each singer

learned something about themselves as musicians, and I was moved by the amount of expressiveness I saw in their faces.

The next step in the process is lonely. After importing videos into **Logic Pro X**, I stripped the audio from the video and edited each vocal track for intonation and rhythmic alignment. Tuning and correcting pitches was fascinating, but lining up details like consonants and cutoffs is something I much prefer doing with a wave of my hand. Singers make all sorts of micro-adjustments in intonation, vowel shape, articulation and dynamics when they are together. It was both surreal and tedious to simulate this by manipulating a series of digital squares on the screen.

After balancing voices within and across sections and selecting the right reverb, the final mp3 file becomes the audio track for the video designed in **Final Cut Pro**. I imported each singer's video and synched each person's lips with the audio track. After cropping and sizing each singer's face into a grid, I added images, backgrounds, transitions, subtitles and a title page. Aligning the video production with the audio was an intriguing, creative process for me as I sought to make the visual elements enhance the meaning and expressive elements of the music. Our virtual concert was a success, and I learned a number of new skills; but it wasn't an experience the singers wanted to repeat in the spring semester.

In January 2021, we took the utmost precautions to mitigate the spread COVID-19. I provided each singer with a special mask designed for singing (specifically **RESONANCE Singer's Mask**) we observed social distancing, opened windows and doors, and rehearsed in a large auditorium. We even rehearsed in small sections – only ten singers at a time – rotating every

20 minutes. It was *that* meaningful to our singers to be together. As spring approached, we moved outdoors where we could all gather together and conform to Guilford College's COVID-19 restrictions. We battled wind, lawnmowers, sirens and motorcycles. The repertoire we learned was simpler and more conducive to singing outdoors under these less than ideal circumstances. In lieu of a concert, we filmed our program outdoors in various formations and locations on our beautiful campus. The video is lovely, but the sound quality was a challenge.

We tackled one virtual project: **The Bless You and Keep You** by Peter C. Lutkin, which aired during our virtual commencement ceremony.¹ Perhaps the best benefit of the virtual choir genre is the ability to engage just about anyone in a project. Many Guilford College Choir alumni were eager to contribute to the project. The connection with alumni through the power of a beloved song is something I will treasure from this challenging time. This musical offering can be found here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15KRrTg3Mwd73FjuRTTpZc5k1O3UskCtg/view>

The happy ending to this story is that we have been singing on the auditorium stage together for the entirety of the fall 2021 semester, still masked and nearly all vaccinated. On December 5 we performed a joyous program titled *We Gather Together*. The concert was live streamed to Guilfordians far and wide on Facebook Live, *and* we hosted a healthy-sized live audience. I have never been more grateful for the choral art.

1. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15KRrTg3Mwd73FjuRTTpZc5k1O3UskCtg/view>
