

Editor's Introduction: Connecting with Other Scholars in a Pandemic

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One of the primary purposes of the Association of Christian Economists is to be a place of connection for Christians in the economics profession. In conversations with some of my peers, I have often run into people who have worked their way through graduate school and into a job without any friends or colleagues in the discipline who take the Christian faith seriously. I have been extraordinarily fortunate in that regard, and have had Christian friends and mentors in the profession throughout my career. I have been reflecting on this recently, in particular as we approach two years of life with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many academics can feel isolated in the best of times, particularly if they are working on a long-term project in an area that none of their immediate institutional colleagues is invested in. The pandemic has isolated people even more, I fear, to the detriment of our community.

There have been some bright spots. The pandemic has forced many conferences and lectures online, and so I have been able to connect with scholars around the world far more often than I would have before. In the midst of this, as a result, I have formed some valuable connections with Christian scholars in other parts of the world, for which I am very thankful. The ASSA meetings are approaching as I write this, and this will be another year in which we meet online. I know that many of our members cannot join us at the ASSA meetings for our annual gathering. The conference requires a large commitment of time and money and, for many of our colleagues, travel budgets are small or non-existent. The meetings serve as an important point of connection for economists, however, and they are always a highlight of my year. Yet I am mourning the inability to meet with other ACE members in person. We will now have two consecutive years with only tenuous online connections to each other. Online business meetings and online paper presentations are a poor substitute for real connections with a network of co-laborers.

In some ways, this journal can still serve as a focal point. We get to see the reflections of our peers in writing, we read their reviews of recent books, and we consider important ideas. However, the journal (and now

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infrequent podcast) cannot replace meeting in person. It behooves us all to work that much harder to stay connected to other Christian economists, and to share opportunities to do our work together. Without any paid staff, ACE can only do so much to connect people. But there is a small role that we can easily play. If you are organizing a session or a social gathering at a professional conference, or if there is an online lecture or panel that might be of interest to our members, do not hesitate to send the information to our secretary Enoch Hill (enoch.hill@wheaton.edu). We can post these opportunities on our website and send out email updates to our members. In addition, we are always looking for more articles. If you see a new book on the market that we should review – or one that you would like to review – please send a quick note to me or to our new book review editor, Jeff Bloem. Any other questions or suggestions are welcome as well.

In this issue of the journal, we have three articles, each of them unique and worth your attention. First, Annette Davis and Christina McRorie provide us a fascinating comparison of liberation theology and development economics, finding some (possibly) unexpected common ground. Second, Paul Oslington offers a retrospective overview of the life and work of Robert Nelson. Nelson's impact on the literature about economics and theology is significant. For those readers not yet acquainted with his contributions, this article is a great place to start. Third, Virginia Beard offers a viewpoint essay that connects Biblical themes with public policies regarding zoning and housing affordability. Finally, we have a collection of valuable book reviews spanning a variety of topics that will be of interest to readers. ■