



RELIGIOUS STUDIES INSIDERS

Graduation 2020



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2020 Religious Studies Insider Graduates



PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S CORNER

This year we are celebrating our graduates in a new way – with a special issue of Religious Studies Insiders!

For the newer folks, and parents and friends looking on, the Religious Studies Insiders include the following:

- Religious Studies Majors
- Religious Studies Minors
- Theology Minors
- Catholic Studies Minors
- Education Majors with a Religious Studies Concentration
- Members of Theta Alpha Kappa

We have a great group of graduates this year to show off!

To state the obvious, this year didn't go as we planned. This year, the 100th anniversary of Siena Heights University, was meant to be a year of community and celebration – a chance to think about the legacy of the Adrian Dominican Sisters and about the kind of legacy that all of us hope to create with our lives.

Instead, we are all stuck at home unable to participate together in end-of-the-year rituals the way we expected.

Perhaps, though, part of the legacy of the Adrian Dominican Sisters and Siena Heights University is that things don't always go as expected. When the Sisters arrived in Adrian, they understood their purpose to be taking care of sick and injured railroad workers in the hospital they would found. But, unexpectedly, they only managed to fill a few hospital beds. The need just wasn't there. The Sisters quickly found a new purpose – education, which eventually led to the founding of our university 100 years ago.

Graduates are always tasked with finding a new purpose, but this year more than most that purpose may take an unexpected form. Dealing with the unexpected, finding a new purpose, and carrying it out in a competent and ethical way is the very foundation of this university. It is the legacy in which we all have been formed. So, we're ready.

To the graduates, be confident that you take this legacy with you. You are ready to be who you were meant to be and to "set the world on fire."

To those not yet graduating, let's keep building this legacy together in the fall. It might take us all sorts of unexpected places.

-Dr. Crosby

RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT AWARD

The Religious Studies Department Award is given when an outstanding senior in our program is graduating. Winners of this award are students who set themselves apart through the quality of their work and the level of theological thinking they achieve over the course of their time at Siena Heights University. The winner, when there is one, is chosen together by the Religious Studies faculty.

This year, we are pleased to present Alex Wilkinson with the Religious Studies Department Award.

Alex, graduating with a Religious Studies Major and Graphic Design Minor, was impressive from her first semester as a freshman. She was not only diligent in her work, but also thoughtful and creative. Although they intimidate many students, Alex was never afraid of office hours or independent studies, and it was in those one-on-one settings that she emerged as a scholar capable of producing original research that rivals that of graduate students. Nevertheless, her true strength is perhaps that her understanding of theology is always grounded in the real struggles and joys of the people she encounters. It should come as no surprise that when asked to produce a photo-metaphor completing the phrase “God is...,” she shared a photo she took of a friend laughing in the sun. Likewise, it should come as no surprise that Alex’s approach to theology is *lived*, and she can often be found volunteering for Habitat for Humanity or at a local parish. It has been a pleasure and honor to work with Alex over the past three years, and we wish her all the best in her new position as parish youth coordinator.

Congratulations, Alex!



“God is...” by Alex Wilkinson,
submitted for Women & Religion
Winter 2018

THETA ALPHA KAPPA INDUCTION

Theta Alpha Kappa is the National Honor Society for Religious Studies and Theology. To be inducted into Theta Alpha Kappa, a student must take at least four courses in religious studies and meet GPA requirements. Once a student is inducted, she is a member for life. Graduating seniors wear red cords with their cap and gown to indicate their membership in the society.

This year, we are pleased to induct Rachel Burgess into Theta Alpha Kappa.

Rachel has completed a Catholic Studies Minor, as well as a major in Social Work, and graduates this year. She has used her religious studies courses as an opportunity to explore engagement in the Catholic Church from a variety of angles. Her work has covered how to engage young people in Catholic parishes, the Catholic sexual abuse scandal, and the significance of the Virgin Mary for Catholics. She comes at all these topics with heart and personal investment in the answers, without ever closing herself off to diverse perspectives. Her vision for the Church is one of inclusivity and hospitality. Rachel will soon bring all this to her new position as a youth minister where she is sure to do great!

Rachel joins fellow graduates, Alex Wilkinson and Madisyn Reed, in the society.

Congratulations, Rachel!

CLASS OF 2020 RELIGIOUS STUDIES INSIDERS



RACHEL BURGESS

Catholic Studies Minor

Member of Theta Alpha Kappa

What's Next: Hired as Youth Minister at Sacred Heart Parish in Mt. Pleasant, MI



SHAE MCCLARY

Religious Studies Major

What's Next: Planning to work with Young Life and the Boys and Girls Club



MADISYN REED

Member of Theta Alpha Kappa

What's Next: Heading to Washington University in St. Louis for a Masters degree in occupational therapy



ALEX WILKINSON

Religious Studies Major

Member of Theta Alpha Kappa

What's Next: Hired as Youth Coordinator at St Pius X Catholic Church in Grandville, MI