

Good afternoon, and welcome back.

We last spoke in mid-November when we were wending our way through a very difficult fall semester, limping across the finish line. While I hope the break over the holidays was restful and even possibly rejuvenating, I know that was most likely not the case. In fact, how did you face the thought of 2021? Before it arrived, I wondered if I would have that same sense of beauty and awe that I have had in the Before Times when a new year starts. There are new possibilities, we get a clean slate, we can decide how we want to shape things. This year...well, it was much harder, at least for me. I certainly had moments of joy in 2020: spending more time with my family, cooking more than I ever have, working out in the mornings together. But, like with all of us, there were also so many moments of sorrow and anger. The world and especially the United States has been out of control for quite a while. Likely, like me, you had all the good and all the bad swirling around inside your head.

I think we all punctuated the end of 2020 with an exclamation point! 2020 was a dumpster fire for sure [see Slide 2]!

While it came as little surprise that the transition to 2021 was rocky, perhaps we weren't expecting the degree of rockiness we faced [see Slide 3]. We were still in the aftermath of a divisive, erratic, and crazy election cycle. And, we were still battling a pandemic and everything that comes with that.

But, I am an eternal optimist and occasional idealist and sometimes when those merge on major holidays with champagne and finger foods...like New Year's Eve 2020, well, you put the ugliness and the sorrow and the anger out of your mind and hope that the new year will bring you all the clichés: a new beginning, a new start, a fresh start...pick your favorite [see Slide 4].

I've always thought that New Years' Eve was a holiday with serious imposter syndrome [see Slide 5]. We place so many expectations on one night. How many times has New Years' Eve met these expectations? Or exceeded them? I'm sounding like a pessimist right now, which is definitely not me. I am seriously a crazy-cat-riding-the-unicorn-under-the-rainbow kind of person. In my life, I have learned to embrace change and to find ways to move on from situations, events, and experiences that cause

sorrow and anger. These changes can be thrilling, scary, happy, sad, bittersweet.

We have started the spring semester. Obviously we cannot know the future. But for me, I choose to embrace that a vaccine is coming. I choose to embrace that we know if we mask, if we socially distance, if we wash our hands, if, while we look out for our own health and safety, we also do what we can for other people's health and safety, then we are doing what we can to move forward. We are doing what we can to embrace 2021 and the new beginnings that it offers. We are doing so in ways that respect the lessons of 2020 while also knowing that we met those challenges and that, somehow, we will meet the challenges 2021 throws at us. But, I admit, this is not easy, not easy at all.

I think one of the greatest gifts that 2020 gave to me was a squad of amazing women [see Slide 6]. We check in with each other every day, we support each other unconditionally, and we amplify each other's voices. What I wish for each of you is that you have such a squad around you. It doesn't matter who they are, how they fit into your life, or even how many are in your squad. What matters is that you have connections to others, even if those others are your pets or your family. I would encourage each of you to reach out to those in your life and make a connection, no matter how fragile.

I love this quote about human connection [see Slide 7] ... it's by Reverend Henry Melvill (not Herman Melville...he often gets the attribution, but as someone who took a class in college that focused on all of Melville's works except *Moby Dick*, these were not his words! (And, as an aside, thank you University of Rochester for the liberal arts education you gave me!))

Ye live not for yourselves; ye cannot live for yourselves; a thousand fibres connect you with your fellow-men, and along those fibres, as along aympathetic threads, run your actions as causes, and return to you as effects.

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.

I will end with this [see Slide 8]. In these most difficult times, we all deserve the beauty and grace of a new beginning. We all deserve a 2021 that is filled with joy rather than sadness. We all deserve an opportunity to celebrate the small steps we take and the giant leaps that we embrace this year. I love this poem written by Lucille Clifton about new beginnings [see Slide 9].

i am running into a new year
and the old years blow back
like a wind
that I catch in my hair
like strong fingers like
all my old promises and
it will be hard to let go
of what I said to myself
about myself
when I was sixteen and
twentysix and thirtysix
even thirtysix but
i am running into a new year
and I beg what I love and
i leave to forgive me

I believe that there are exciting changes on the horizon (and this is not the crazy cat riding a unicorn talking!). The small steps will give us peace and the giant leaps will wake us up and move us forward into new spaces, new ways of thinking, and new ways of doing! Let's embrace where 2021 takes us! *Alea iacta est.*

PURDUE UNIVERSITY SENATE

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For Senate Meeting
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2020 !





Riding into NY Eve
2020 with optimism
and idealism



Imposter Syndrome

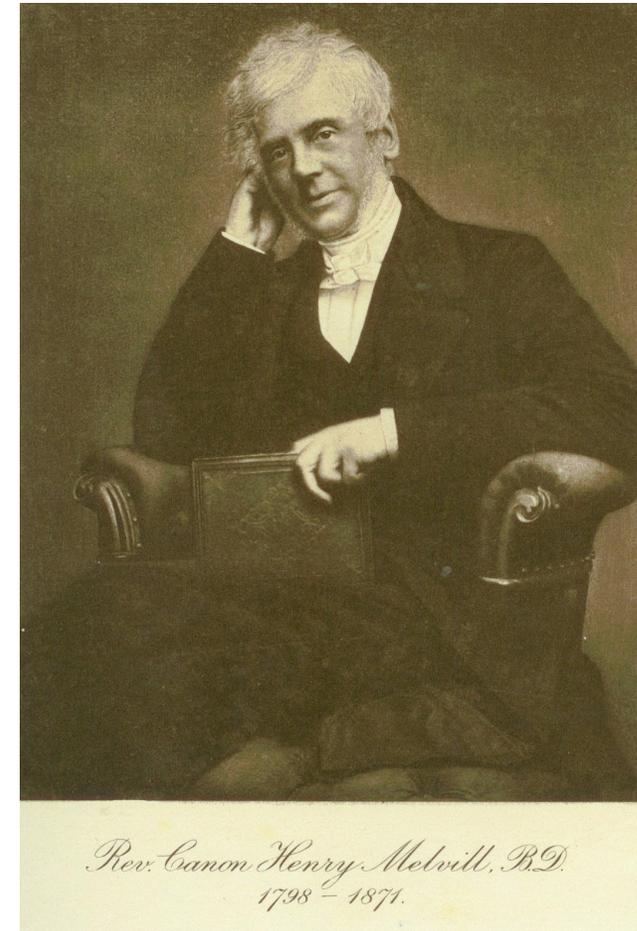


The Squad

1855 Sermon

Henry Melvill, Anglican Preacher (NOT Herman Melville, whale hunter)

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i am running into a new year

Lucille Clifton (1987), Good Woman: Poems and A Memoir 1969-1980

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See <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/remembering-lucille-clifton>

THANK YOU!
STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY