



**Our New Plaza**  
 We are grateful to the Piper Family Fund for the financial support that made the newly designed plaza possible. We expect many Collegeville Institute resident scholars, program participants, guests, and friends to enjoy the beauty of the new entrance and the outdoor gathering space.

**INSIDE  
THE**

**COLLEGEVILLE  
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**The Book Nook**



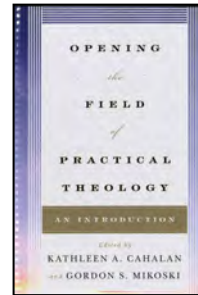
Former Collegeville Institute resident scholar and board member, **Margaret O'Gara**, died in 2012, yet her work lives on in a recently published posthumous collection of her selected talks and essays in *No Turning Back: The Future of Ecumenism* (Liturgical Press, 2014).

After Margaret's death, her husband and intellectual partner, former resident scholar **Michael Vertin**, worked to bring to publication this collection of papers Margaret wrote over the final 15 years of her life.

For 36 years, Margaret was a member of the faculty of theology at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto. During that time, she also served on six different ecumenical dialogues.

Former short-term resident scholar, **David M. Thompson**, Emeritus Professor of Modern Church History, Cambridge University, wrote the foreword for this collection and says, "...these papers are an appropriate way to remember her commitment to the ecumenical quest."

**Kathleen Cahalan** (Collegeville Institute Project Director), along with Gordon Mikoski, edited *Opening the Field of Practical Theology* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), an introduction to practical theology. Kathleen



notes, "We wanted to show practical theology in its complexity and multiplicity, helping readers navigate a broad-ranging field."

**Laura Fanucci** (Collegeville Institute Research Associate) authored *Everyday Sacraments: The Messy Grace of Parenting* (Liturgical Press, 2014). Laura describes herself as a "Seeker of God in the chaos of laundry and life with littles." *Everyday Sacraments* is her story of raising three boys and stumbling into the "surprising truth of what the seven sacraments really mean: that God is present always, even in the messes of motherhood."



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## Thimbleberries



Thimbleberries were not on my mind when I applied for a writing workshop at the Collegeville Institute. I wanted time set apart from the busyness and business of everyday life. I wanted a view of a lake, fenced-in by maple trees. I wanted to be in a community where I felt the ease of saying, ‘Yes, I am a writer.’

The world does not need another writer, and yet many of us who come to this place called Collegeville—the home of Saint John’s Abbey and University, and the Collegeville Institute—for rest, renewal, and yes, writing, seek to push against the glacier of self-doubt about our own ability to write. We want our writing to matter and we want to be relevant. We place one word after another, hoping the result buzzes between the ears, sets off sirens of delight, and maybe even gives new insight into our lived reality.

Writing, though often a solitary pursuit, also involves community. I needed the community in Collegeville. This past summer I lived and wrote in western North Dakota, the area currently impacted by the Bakken oil boom. In my work, I interviewed dozens of residents, oil field workers, and newcomers; drove thousands of miles, and sought refuge in the southern Badlands, soaking in the strawberry colored scoria, grey-yellow bentonite clay, and smelling sweet sage. This, though, was a solitary pursuit in a land on fire.

In July I arrived in Collegeville, a place where I stopped on my travels to and from North Dakota during my undergraduate days in southeastern Minnesota, stretching my legs and sauntering around Lake Sagatagan. I stayed at the Saint John’s Abbey Guesthouse during graduate school, seeking silence and time spent in prayer. In some circuitous way, I came back to Collegeville as part of a writing workshop—I prefer to call it serendipity.

July proved to be the ideal time for writing in Minnesota—light poured into my apartment on Stumpf Lake, evening meals were filled with the din of meaningful conversation, and sessions on publishing, the writing life, and improvisational comedy were both helpful and hilarious.

My morning routine at the Collegeville Institute commenced with coffee to jolt my brain and a daily poem to fire my imagination. Early in the week I read Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poem “God’s Grandeur,” which is dappled with natural imagery. During one of our group walks to the evening meal, my friend Lisa noticed me stop to pick a thimbleberry.

“What are those?” she asked.

I told her that they were thimbleberries, similar to raspberries only smaller and sometimes had little taste. I told her that in July they shift from bright cranberry red to a deep plum color and, if you are lucky, you can get some before the birds feast on the juice-filled berries.

Lisa asked me how often I had been eating thimbleberries throughout the week. “Every time I pass this bush,” I told her.

“Hmmm. That reminds me of marking myself with holy water before entering church.”

Perhaps this is why I came to Collegeville: living in a land filled with flares, rocking pump jacks, and large semis, I needed to be reminded of the sacredness of the small wonders of the world, what Hopkins calls “the dearest freshness deep down things.”

The thimbleberries certainly went down into me, but perhaps best of all they now stand as an image of my time spent in community, spent in prayer, spent writing—which is to say, discovering the type of person I want to become.

*Taylor Brorby is currently pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University. He participated in Apart, and yet a Part this past summer. Taylor is currently editing an anthology of creative writing on fracking in America.*