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STEPPINGSTONES  
SCHOLARSHIP



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AVELINE  
2026 WINNER

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Past & Present : Safeguarding our Faith

Holding my mom's hand as I walked to the doors of my school, I put my mask on over my mouth and nose. I already wanted to take it off. Inside, our principal scanned each face with a scanning thermometer to check for signs of sickness. My mom tried to give me a kiss goodbye for the day, but was immediately reprimanded. From that moment, I faced a day of constant mask "reminders," keeping my head down and waiting for the school day to end. Rather than the big hall where the classes normally had chapel together, we instead watched chapel on a screen silently in our classrooms. I loved school before covid, and I love it now, but during the pandemic I asked God why he brought this misery upon us. This year we studied the early American colonies, and I began to imagine what it would be like to be transported and live in 1773.

...It is 1773 and the British Parliament has started taxing molasses. My family lives in the house my father built. There are two rooms, a dirt floor, and holes cut in the walls for windows. When I walk outside into the crowded Boston streets, the air is foul because sewage systems have not yet been invented. We have all lost weight due to the many new taxes. This is something my parents angrily discuss and complain about at night by candlelight. My mother taught me to read my Bible and write in my diary; all I have to know is that God has a plan for me.

Neighbors across the street were forced to feed and house two British soldiers who threatened them with even more taxation. Does God mean for this to be happening? My father told me to stay away from the soldiers and not to go out without him or my older brother. "Be on your guard; firm in your faith; be courageous; be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13 NIV). This verse reminds me to be strong and not lose faith when times are difficult. We can no longer afford the tea I like to drink while I mend clothing to help our family earn money. Even worse, a soldier is forcing me to wash his uniform and darn his socks. He is not living in our house, but the extra time and soap stretches my father and mother's meager earnings.

Mother and Father talk about a protest happening on December 16, 1773. Father is going to take my brother and stand up for our rights as Colonists. We speak quietly in case soldiers or British loyalists overhear our conversations. Parliament's new rules are getting out of hand! God would want us to be strong even when the British soldiers are scaring and intimidating us. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9 NIV). We have a duty to push back against these tyrannical actions that will result in us losing the very freedom we came to America to enjoy. My family took part in this protest to make sure this would not happen. The protest sounds scary; masked men dumping tea into the Boston Harbor to protest taxation without representation. The soldiers are going to be furious!

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1 NIV). We can use

God to help us in times that we need Him most. In fourth grade, I witnessed one of my friends receive a Covid test. I saw the nurse put an 8-inch swab into her nose that looked like it went all the way up to her brain. My parents fought for me to not take covid tests or vaccines. My mom eventually found a waiver that allowed me to be maskless at school. I know they wrote letters, attended meetings, and did everything in their power to fight the mandates, just like my imaginary parents in Boston. History and my own experience show that we must be vigilant in safeguarding our God-given rights.