

The Church and Disaster ■ Christ on Campus

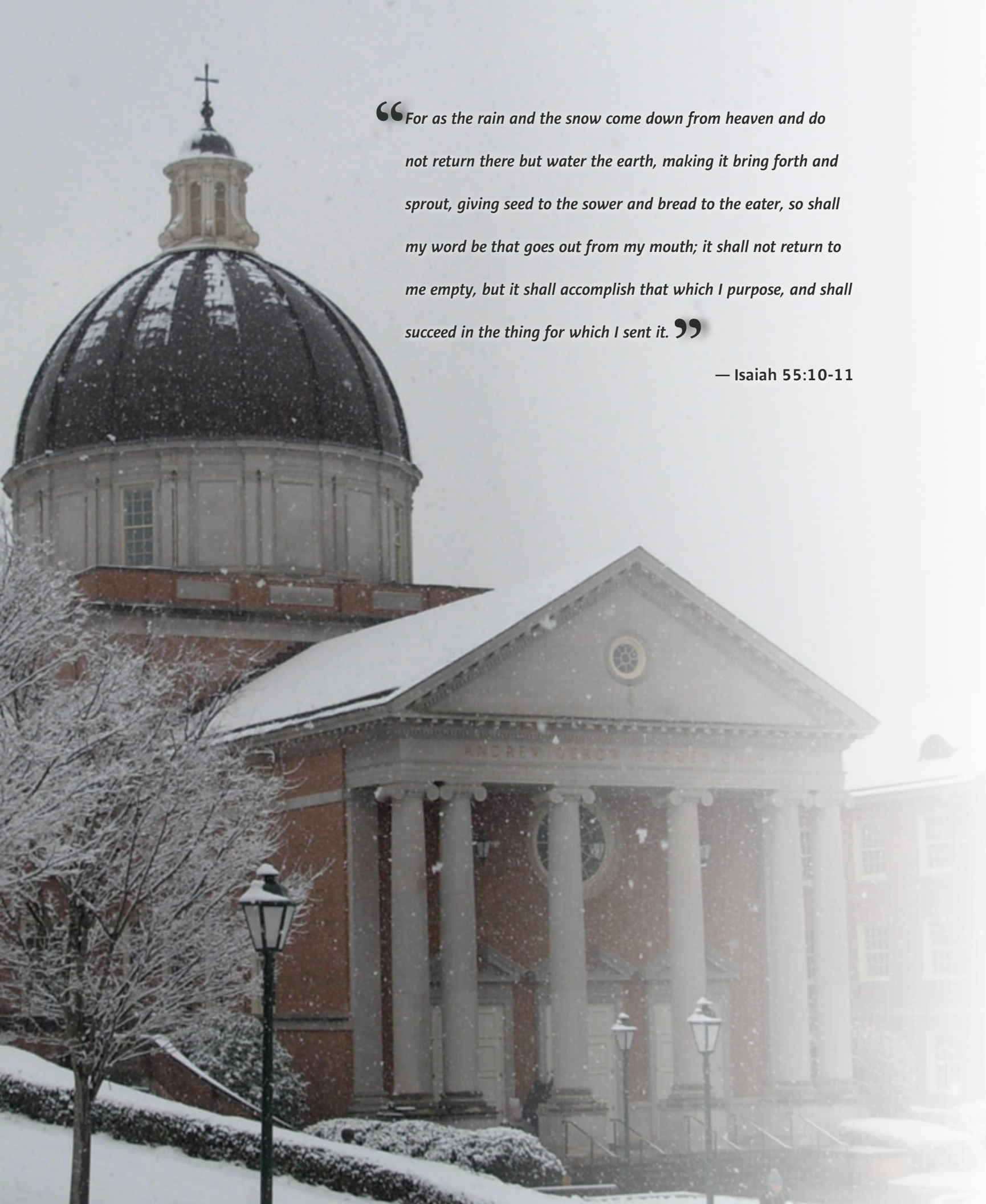
Beeson

2012



A Vision for the Aging Church

By James M. Houston
and Michael Parker



“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

— Isaiah 55:10-11

Beeson

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2

FROM THE DEAN
Maximal Generosity

4

CULTURE
A Vision for the Aging Church
Facing Memory Loss with Hope in God's Remembrance

10

MINISTRY
The Church and Disaster
Alabama Churches and Tornado Relief

14

MINISTRY
Christ on Campus
Beeson Alumni in College Ministry

20

COMMUNITY
Beeson Portrait
Rob Willis
Community News

Beeson Alumni

28

MINISTRY
Sojourning Together



ROW 1; Maximal Generosity **2;** A Vision for the Aging Church **4;** The Church and Disaster **10;** Christ on Campus **14;** **ROW 2;** Beeson Portrait **20;** Community News **22;** Alumni **24;** Sojourning Together **28.**

Maximal Generosity

The Beeson Divinity School Fund

By Timothy George

I never met Dora Maclellan Brown, but her joyous generosity had a profound influence on my life. Born in 1879 in New Brunswick, Canada, “Aunt Dora,” as she was known, moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, my hometown, in 1892. She was a deeply committed Christian woman, active in her community and church. She was also a teacher of God’s Word, and she knew how important it was for pastors to be well trained for the ministry. Aunt Dora died in 1974 at age 94. Several years before, she had

established a charitable trust to be used to support seminary students preparing for the ministry.

As a student with a definite sense of God’s calling on my life, but with little financial resources of my own, I was chosen as the first scholar to receive support from this fund. Over the years, hundreds of other theological students have been the beneficiaries of Aunt Dora’s vision and generosity, including a number of our own Beeson Divinity School students.

Ralph Waldo Beeson, like

Aunt Dora, was selfless and unstinting in his generosity. He was not hesitant to make his wishes known. He was willing to support a school, he said, that would be serious about preparing “pastors who can preach.” He wanted a school that would be explicitly evangelical in its theological commitments, interdenominational in its outreach to the entire Body of Christ and committed to sharing the love of Christ throughout the world.

Since its founding in 1988, Beeson Divinity School has

graduated nearly 1,000 students. Each of these has been blessed by Mr. Beeson and his visionary gift. These wonderful men and women of God are now serving the cause of Christ in every inhabited continent on earth. My greatest joy as the dean of the divinity school is connecting with our alums and seeing the remarkable work they are doing for Christ and his church. Without exception, they are filled with gratitude for the training they received at Beeson Divinity School. They are thankful for our faculty, for training in ministry, for the rich resources for study and research they found here, for community worship in Hodges Chapel, for the focus on prayer and spiritual life, for friendships made, and love received, and directions set. They are also grateful for the financial support they received from Beeson Divinity School, for the generosity from others that poured into their lives and enabled them to pursue God’s calling in the service of the church.

Now is the time for us to ensure that Mr. Beeson’s dream will become a reality for pastors, missionaries and ministers of tomorrow. As we think about the future, it is crucial that we cultivate a new generation of friends, donors and prayer partners, a cadre of encouragers who believe in the mission of this school and are willing to support it—personally, spiritually

and financially. My dream and my prayer is that Beeson Divinity School will be able to support with generous scholarship funding the rising generation of theological students God is sending our way. For this to happen, we need your support.

In connection with our 25th anniversary, we have established a new office of development for Beeson Divinity School directed by Carolyn Lankford. Carolyn is a wonderful Christian woman deeply committed to the Gospel and to the mission of our school. (You can read more about Carolyn on page 23.) With her help, we have established a new Beeson Divinity School Fund. We are asking for your prayers and your financial support as we look to the future with gratitude and great expectancy.

Perhaps you are thinking: Well, I am no Dora Maclellan Brown or Ralph Waldo Beeson. True enough, they were extraordinary individuals whom God blessed with great financial means. But when we consider the



▲ Dean Timothy George

whole scope of God’s blessings on our lives, we must admit that, as someone put it, we are all “embarrassingly gifted.” We all have the capacity to be generous with what God has given to us. I like the way Eugene Peterson renders 2 Corinthians 9:11:

This most generous God . . . gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.✝

But when we consider the whole scope of God’s blessings on our lives, we must admit that...we are all “embarrassingly gifted.”



◀ Dora Maclellan Brown and Ralph Waldo Beeson

A Vision for the Aging Church

Facing Memory Loss with Hope in God's Remembrance

By James M. Houston & Michael Parker

Photography by Mandy Busby

Contrary to popular opinion, most American families do not abandon family members with disabilities, diseases and conditions to paid professionals and paraprofessionals. Yet most health-care-service practitioners and some church leaders fail to acknowledge and affirm the central role families play in extending health care services, because most pastors and lay leaders lack the necessary skills to encourage and enable families to do their Herculean jobs more effectively. Pastors and lay leaders need to acknowledge and support family caregivers in their vital caring role as a first step toward dealing with the growing phenomenon of caregiving and facing the unique challenges of family members caring for individuals with disabling conditions.

Many people who live in community settings who belong to churches require assistance at some time because of chronic disease and disability, and dementia is clearly an example of a common, chronic, progressively disabling condition that affects the person and the family. The term *dementia* (or *senility*) indicates progressive, marked decline in intellectual or cognitive functions associated with damage to brain tissue; this may affect personality



and behavior, and it may be of a reversible or an irreversible type. In the aging process, once there is loss of memory, the immediate popular judgment is, alas, this must be the onset of the dreaded brain disease, Alzheimer's, which leaves the body still alive after the brain is dying or dead.

An Embodied Patient or a Socialized Person?

There is a tension between an unrelenting disease and human care, encapsulated well by the statement of Oliver Sacks, professor of neurology and psychiatry at Columbia University in New York, "In examining disease, we gain knowledge about anatomy and physiology and biology. In examining the person with disease, we gain wisdom about life."

Yet new philosophers now use neuroscience to redefine philosophy as merely the function of embodied minds, the body being everything. Increasingly, even the larger culture struggles to come to grips with the common fallacy that "the mind" is only the brain. The brain is a remarkably flexible organ of the body, which, since the 1960s, has been studied and understood more completely by the science of neuropathology. Its circuitry is not static, but dynamic, slowly changing according to both organic and also environmental conditions, themselves in flux. The brain's extraordinary ability to remember is like the recording archangel Gabriel, reputed in the Middle Ages to have written down every committed human deed for all time. But "the mind" and indeed "consciousness" are wider categories, socialized by many more external stimuli that shape the entire human narrative of what it means to be created as a unique person.

James M. Houston



The dictionary defines a mentor as a person of wisdom, a trusted counselor or teacher who guides someone else by the force of friendship and example. Dr. James M. Houston has been such a mentor, not only to me personally but to Beeson Divinity School itself. A geographer by training, Jim who was a friend of C. S. Lewis, moved to Vancouver to become the founding principal of Regent

College. Under Jim's leadership, Regent became a thriving center of theological education. Dr. Gisela Kreglinger, who teaches spiritual formation here at Beeson, recalls, "I met Dr. Jim Houston at the very beginning of my theological studies at Regent College in Vancouver. Before even taking any classes from him, Dr. Houston invited me to be in conversation with him about the Christian life and, more particularly, how I understood God to be at work in my own life. We began these very personal conversations over 15 years ago and have continued them until this day."

In his retirement, Jim visited Beeson on numerous occasions leading workshops, retreats, and offering courses in spiritual formation. He taught us to emphasize the *personal* aspect of preparing men and women for service in the church. He became a spiritual friend to many in our community—secretaries, students, faculty colleagues. It is not too much to say that Jim Houston has had a formative influence on our school. He models the graces of the Christian life and Christian leadership in a way that furthers the Gospel and draws us closer to Christ and to one another. ✝

-Timothy George

Increasingly, even the larger culture struggles to come to grips with the common fallacy that "the mind" is only the brain



women as well as men. Jesus even included lepers, perhaps the equivalent of social outcasts that the demented have now become in our modern culture. All categories of people were treated as persons in Christ. The church, as in days of old, must take a countercultural stand in the twenty-first century regarding the unborn child and the senile alike, to treat all as persons, not cultural artifacts, as wanted or unwanted, useful or useless, legacy or burden. We would argue that even if a demented person requires burdensome care, Christ is able to provide meaning for such care and the courage and capacity to set correct boundaries that protect the caregiver and recipient of care. But we must be grounded in certain scriptural principles. We are all persons, all created “in the image of God,” whatever our religious or ethnic origins. Yet between the first century and now, little help was given to the helpless, the insane and the other vulnerable categories of humanity. Admonition to love the least of these helps give biblical purpose and meaning to the hard work of caring for someone who might not recognize or appreciate the care. With earlier diagnosis, the church may need to move into position to prepare those affected by the disease and those who choose to be

lovingly present. Though the term *caregiver* is helpful, it represents a rather modern application of words that leaves out the word *love*.

Barbara Tuchman, who has studied carefully the upheavals of the fourteenth century, notes that Western society in the late Middle Ages made virtually no organized provision for the vulnerable members of society other than within a few religious communities. To be fair,

or seeming absence of God, an empty prayer life and other experiences.

Such a broad interpretation of *dementia* requires a paradigm shift like that introduced by early Christianity into the Greco-Roman world. For the incipient credibility of Christianity in the first century was that it was countercultural: it included Gentiles as well as Jews, slaves as well as Roman citizens,

Admonition to love the least of these helps give biblical purpose and meaning to the hard work of caring for someone who might not recognize or appreciate the care

Though the term *caregiver* is helpful, it represents a rather modern application of words that leaves out the word *love*

church leaders and doctors have historically been confused about innovative medical practices until modern times. And yet the concept of personhood could have better informed even antiquated medical care. Only gradually from the seventeenth century onwards did institutionalized care begin to take place. But even in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the great innovator of medical care for those suffering from mental distress, Samuel Hahnemann, could still condemn the way doctors treated “the insane,” as worse than prison guards might treat criminals. Most of these mental institutions still remained depersonalizing until the past two or three decades.

Today, far better diagnostic skills are in place for dementia. In the past few decades, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, used to diagnose psychiatric or psychological disorders, has literally tripled in size and content. Most professionals admit that labeling a person is not equivalent to cure, but an accurate diagnosis constitutes a necessary step in the right direction. Even so, major cultural modifications are still needed. For example, how do we discuss memory loss with seniors? Many are confused about the terms *dementia* and *Alzheimer’s disease*. The latter is still associated with “no help, no cure and no hope.” It is a neurological condition of brain degeneration. But dementia, while suggestive of a lessening of cognitive faculties (including memory loss) suggests, we would posit, also a dementing environment—a culture of dementia—of being socially considered “growing old.” It is thus a prevalent condition of all seniors—of becoming conscious of the loss of self-significance, of a weakening of self-identity, of becoming “a social burden,” with the conscious awareness of the growing loss of previous

abilities. Thus a senior will now enter into a pattern of life that could include emotional and mental disarray, where it is often difficult to distinguish between cause and effect. Does depression occur from brain disease or from social alienation? Does the speed of dementia indicate the collapse of social support, whereas neurological decline usually moves much more slowly? Rarely does a senior ever have the reflective powers or the advice from others to face up to such issues.

The care needs of dementia sufferers encompass three distinct dimensions. First, in dementia we can and should apply state of science findings from neuroscience and other specialties. Second, we must consider whether our whole culture may be showing signs of being “a dementing society” that contributes to widespread senior experiences of dementia. Third, we must face up to the magnitude of ethical tasks required of our caregivers. All three approaches are needed, suggesting that the growing challenge of dementia

in an aging society can become a blessing in disguise by changing our cultural paradigm and fostering a more caring society.

Memory Reflects God’s Character

In a scientific culture like ours, is there any greater threat to a senior than being told through all sorts of innuendos, “You’re losing your mind!” For four primary reasons, the loss of memory is a new universal fear among our society as we age. First, cognition is of primary importance in our technological society. Second, personality changes clearly occur as a result of memory loss and its emotional consequences. Third, we have become a society in which people consciously value their selfmade identity and exaggerate the value of the role their professional careers define them. Fourth, contemporary living is complex. (This becomes painfully apparent when we lose our wallet with all its plastic cards so vital to our day-to-day welfare. We have so many more things we say we cannot afford to forget!)

Into this setting, a Christian



response speaks profoundly. Memory is far more intrinsically God's business than a human concern. As Julian of Norwich took up a small hazelnut into her hand, she said "God made it; God cares for it; for God loves it!" A dear friend of mine (Dr. Houston) died with a hazelnut still tucked inside his pillowcase. For the God who created us will take care of us even beyond the shadow of death. Søren Kierkegaard observed: "life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." If we know we came from a loving, healthy family we can live confidently into the future. Biblically we are assured we were created "in the image and likeness of God," and that his purpose was to be Immanuel, "God with us." Israel was assured God had made a covenant with them, to be "their God," who stipulated his bond with them as "the God who remembers" them. We can only fundamentally understand the category of person as a theological category, of being intrinsically relational in our creation by the triune God of grace.

When therefore "God remembered Noah" and saved him from the flood (Gen 8:1), "remembered Abraham" in saving Lot from destruction (Gen 19:29), opened Rachael's womb to bear a child in her barrenness (Gen 30:22) or heard the groaning of the afflicted Israelites in their bondage in Egypt (Ex 2:24), God had much more than a good memory. The term reflects God's divine character in both redemption and judgment, his redemptive history of Israel. God's remembrance expresses his attentiveness towards us personally, whether in grace or in judgment. Unlike human memory, which is corrupted and diverted to other loyalties, God's active remembering is identical with his

actions and his character of love. It is his creative and redemptive power. Our powers of memory may not be sustained, but he is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

The prophets, then, strongly urge us "to remember the Lord thy God," and indeed to "remember his statutes" (stipulations of the covenant life). Within the Hebrew context, states Brevard Childs, "an act of remembrance is not a simple inner reflection, but involves an action, an encounter with historical events." The past will not disappear so that we operate only presently, as God too will not go away just for our rebellious desires. Such remembrance implies confession, contrition and conversion. Above all it calls our attention to the exclusive attention

God had much more than a good memory. The term reflects God's divine character in both redemption and judgment, his redemptive history of Israel. God's remembrance expresses his attentiveness towards us personally

we should give of ourselves to God, since our uniqueness reflects upon the universal human need of God, of a relationship with him that no one else can ever rival. Such remembrance then is the equivalence of "choosing life," eternal life, over all else.

Biblical memory is always associated with the *heart*, which is the most important anthropological term of the Old Testament. It functions to control all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual functions, so no English word is like it, making it difficult to translate. As my (Dr. Houston's) friend and colleague Bruce Waltke has described, it is "the inner forum of the soul," the center of one's personal being in both its inner and outer realities. Such "remembrance within the heart" is therefore far deeper and richer than merely having a good memory. Christians in a state of advanced dementia, having lost mental memory, can remain secure in the Father's everlasting arms. God's memory of us qualifies us as human persons, even if we are in an advanced state of dementia. My niece with Down's syndrome has a love for Jesus that is genuinely central to her inner emotions; within her mental handicap, she can still solemnly obey Christ's invitation at the Eucharist to "do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:24-25).

Christian memory therefore is unlike classical memory, which is merely the recall of reflective reason and at its best, recalling the existence of the gods, or even the belief that the soul is itself divine. Conjoining memory with the heart, the great Christian father of the church, Augustine of Hippo (354–430) sees memory as "the eye of the heart" and "the love of God" as the purpose of memory. In

the beginning of his great classic *Confessions*, "remembering the Creator" is the act of conversion and in the praise of the heart, as knowing the proper relationship to God. This then leads to the proper relationship with the neighbor, or "the other," to love socially as well. While memory plays a cognitive part in Augustine, as it must do, this is subsidiary to the interiority of personal relatedness to and with God, which lies at the heart of biblical faith.

Following further into the biblical role of memory, the other great father of the Reformation, John Calvin (1509–1564), interprets the Scriptures not as timeless truths but as the participatory engagement of God with human persons. It is by having a heart submissive to God, in the light of Christ, by the operation of his Holy Spirit, that we properly exercise the role of memory. So memory is not the simple deposit of information we can recall later, but it is more truly the inward formation of the person by being brought into a relationship with the Trinity. Thus there is no true memory for Calvin, without God being its object in spiritual attentiveness. Thus the autonomous self, which today is so threatened by the calamity of dementia, is itself "demented," for it has no true knowledge of one's self, nor indeed any knowledge of God.

In his commentary on the book of Deuteronomy, Calvin thus reminds us of God's remedy of remembrance: "Nothing but the recollection of [the Israelites'] deliverance could tame their arrogance; for what could be more unreasonable than that *they* should be insolent who were formerly the slaves of a most haughty nation [Egypt], and who had not acquired

their liberty by their own efforts, but contrary to their hope and deserts had obtained it by God's mere favor."

Christian families dealing with dementia and other forms of mental deficiency can be assured and comforted that Christian faith is not undermined nor destroyed by the losses of cognition. Primarily, God is mindful of us—not the other way around—as the psalmist exclaims with gratitude and wonder in Psalm 8. Since our memory of God is much more a "soulful affair" than a matter of brain chemistry, the findings of neuroscience will never threaten our faith. ✚

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We gratefully acknowledge the residents of Eastview Healthcare Center in Birmingham, Alabama, who gave their consent for their photos to appear in this magazine. The subjects of these photos do not suffer from dementia.

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■ **Mandy Busby** is a photographer based in Birmingham, Alabama. Her husband, Joel, graduated from Beeson Divinity School in December 2011.

Christians in a state of advanced dementia, having lost mental memory, can remain secure in the Father's everlasting arms. God's memory of us qualifies us as human persons, even if we are in an advanced state of dementia



The Church and Disaster

Alabama Churches and Tornado Relief

By Betsy Childs

On April 27, 2011, Daven Watkins waited out the tornado with his wife and children, huddled in the basement wearing bicycle helmets. Their home was relatively unscathed, but when they emerged after the storm, they found a devastated community. Nearly one out of every three homes in Pleasant Grove, Alabama, was destroyed.

The 62 tornadoes that tore through the state that day in 2011 claimed the lives of 247 people. The casualties of the storm were overwhelming. In Birmingham, police closed the roads around UAB and St. Vincent's hospital to all traffic except the ambulances flooding in from communities throughout the state. Those of us who live near these hospitals could hear sirens late into the night.

“God sometimes uses our own crises to prepare us to minister to others.”

Meeting Needs

Thousands of people became homeless in the course of a couple hours.

Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove and graduate of Beeson Divinity School, watched his church spring into action. “In good Baptist fashion, we started feeding people,” Watkins said. Church members began to prepare all the food from the quickly defrosting church freezer. The church building became a shelter. “It was a beautiful thing to see God’s people rise up, without hesitation, without instruction.”

The Christian Service Mission in downtown Birmingham became a hub for donation collections and redistribution. Day after day, the mission’s warehouse filled and emptied, filled and emptied. Volunteers drove truckloads of first-aid supplies, food and diapers to small towns that had been nearly demolished.

Because the need for volunteer manpower was so large, Samford University offered two paid service days to all employees who assisted with disaster relief. More than 95 service days were taken by employees in the months that followed the tornadoes. Those who couldn’t help during the week volunteered on weekends. Hundreds of students, staff and faculty worked to tarp roofs, cut apart enormous tangles of debris with chainsaws, and feed and shelter those who had lost their homes.

Birmingham’s M-POWER Ministries opened satellite health clinics in Pratt City and Tuscaloosa to treat tornado victims. Many people who lost their homes also lost vital medications, so they came to the volunteer doctors and pharmacists at the M-POWER clinics for replacement prescriptions. Pastors and counselors volunteered to provide emotional support for patients.

Rebecca Hays, a student at Beeson Divinity School, served as a volunteer counselor. Hays survived the tornado that struck Union University in 2008. “Having something as massive as an EF-4 tornado break into your life changes you forever,” Hays said. “I had a unique way of relating to these tornado victims, but it was not exact. I do believe, however, that God sometimes uses our own crises to prepare us to minister to others.”

Ryan Hankins, a 2003 graduate of Beeson Divinity School, serves as executive director of M-POWER, which seeks to break the cycle of poverty. “It was humbling to see so many from across the state and region respond to our call to serve in Jesus’ name,” Hankins said. “Sadly, the work M-POWER did was not that different from what we do year-round—serve those who have next to nothing and nowhere to turn. Everyone who saw firsthand

the damage done by these tornadoes will never forget it. I pray that the church will not forget that, though the immediacy of recovery has passed, crisis is an everyday reality for far too many of our neighbors.”

Asking Questions

In addition to immediate physical needs, the storms left gaping questions in need of pastoral answers. Young and old asked, “Why?” in unison. Watkins assured his congregation, “God does not have a vendetta against the people of Pleasant Grove. If this was a display of God’s wrath, not one of us would be left standing!”

Jason Odom, a Beeson Divinity School student from Pleasant Grove, said that people struggled with the “seemingly indiscriminate nature of the storm;” they wondered why some were spared and not others. Although First



“It was a beautiful thing to see God’s people rise up, without hesitation, without instruction.”

▼ Damaged house in Pleasant Grove





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Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove lost its steeple, First Assembly of God, right across the street, was flattened. The people of the hardest-hit communities who did not lose their houses, church or family members struggled with survivor guilt.

First Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove grieved deeply for Reba Jones, a beloved elderly church member killed by the storm. Watkins said that church found comfort in the words spoken by Jesus in John 14: “In my Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” In this passage, Watkins finds the answer to the question, “Where was Jesus that night?”

“I know that Jesus was in Pleasant Grove the night of April 27,” Watkins told his congregation on the Sunday after the tornado. “I know that for many reasons, but one of which is that he came and took unto himself Miss Reba Jones. He did not reserve that for a messenger of heaven. His word says, ‘I will come and get you,’ so he came and received her!”

◀ Pleasant Grove, Alabama

Odom said that months after the storms, people wrestled with new questions. Those who lost all of their earthly possessions were faced with big decisions about where to rebuild and how to start over, and many are still asking, “What is God’s will for my life now?”

Watching Walls Come Down

Lyord Watson graduated from Beeson Divinity School in December of 2010. During his last semester of seminary, Watson had completed his ministry internship at Mission Birmingham. This nonprofit organization connects and mobilizes the Birmingham community—including churches, businesses and government agencies—to work together to

▼ First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove



address the needs of the city’s most vulnerable. After the storm hit, vulnerability took on new meaning, and the need for connectivity was greater than ever.

Watson returned to Mission Birmingham to supervise receiving and dispersing donations at a drop-off center temporarily opened in Birmingham’s Southside district. He and others at the ministry connected the Red Cross and FEMA to local organizations, and helped match volunteers with needs. In the face of staggering devastation, local churches pooled their resources like never before.

Watson said, “The storm forced groups of people to work together who otherwise would not work together. Before that, people would have their own groups and do their own things. The storm was so big and the need was so much that organizations had to work together.”

He told the story of one Southern Baptist minister who wanted to get his congregation involved in the cleanup efforts who asked a Presbyterian pastor for help. The Presbyterian pastor introduced the Southern Baptist pastor to an African American Holiness church that could give him access into the affected communities. “Race didn’t matter,” Watson said. “Theological differences didn’t matter. It



▲ Lyord Watson



▲ One volunteer comforts another in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

“It did not matter what your neighbor looked like, if he or she was a person in need. It was a beautiful picture of people helping people in the name of Christ”

was the body of Christ working together in order to help those who are in need.”

Since the storms, there have been more opportunities to work together. “Whether the differences will be lasting,” said Watson, “still remains to be seen.”

Daven Watkins also saw the relief effort bring down divisions. “Many walls came down. I don’t just mean physical walls. Racial walls came down. Socioeconomic walls came down. It did not matter what your neighbor looked like, if he or she was a person in need. It was a beautiful picture of people helping people in the name of Christ.”

Reflecting on the newfound unity he saw in the aftermath of the tornado, Watkins said, “I pray those walls don’t get rebuilt. Some walls need to be rebuilt. Homes need to be rebuilt. Structures need to be refortified. I pray that those walls of racial and socioeconomic division are obliterated from now until Jesus returns.” +

■ Betsy Childs is Web and Publications editor for Beeson Divinity School.

▼ Rebuilding in Pleasant Grove



Christ on Campus

Beeson Alumni in College Ministry

By Sherri Brown

As the shadows change and the crisp autumn air rustles the oak leaves, students trade in swimsuits for backpacks and, for another year, stroll across well-manicured quads on their way to higher education. For decades, such students chose majors that after four years of study would earn a good living. They joined organizations that would position them for worldly success and dated each other in the hopes of finding a spouse. Most of them, even if they strayed a bit in school, returned to church with their young families as they pursued the American Dream.

While some of those goals still prove important to today's college students, many of their goals are quite different. A vast majority of current college students discover

new ways of viewing faith and never return to Christianity, at least in an orthodox form. In fact, a recent Barna poll reveals that 61% of today's American college students do not participate or serve in a local church after they graduate. This makes the next generation one of the largest mission fields to date.

In the last decade, more and more Beeson Divinity School graduates have been led into this mission field. College and university ministry is one of the fastest-growing trends among alumni eager to impact the world for the Kingdom of God. Some serve directly on the college campus, while others are church staff members ministering to young adults. In each case, they are called upon to answer some of life's toughest questions for a

generation that is globally focused, mindful of social justice and anxious to discover its purpose in the world.

Life On Campus

Heidi Cheatham graduated from Beeson Divinity School in 2001 and immediately began serving as the Baptist campus minister at a community college in her home state of Mississippi. After two years, she moved to her alma mater, Mississippi College, where she serves as associate director of the Baptist Campus Ministry. "The beginning of my call to college ministry started when I was in college," she said. "I interned with the college ministry at my church, and since then, God has continued to open doors that lead to college ministry."

Cheatham's passion is to mobilize college students for missions around the world. Along with other duties, she disciples and trains students who choose to serve as summer missionaries or participate in international mission trips. In her time at Mississippi College, she has led teams to Indonesia, Thailand and China.

Cheatham has been encouraged to see a growing global and missional awareness among college students. "College students . . . have an increasing awareness of the needs around them," she explained. "They realize that they need to be part of something much

College students realize that they need to be part of something much bigger than themselves

bigger than themselves to make an impact. . . . They also have a more mature worldview than college students in the past because of opportunities to serve abroad and easy access to these opportunities."

Like Cheatham, James Taylor, a 2002 graduate of Beeson Divinity School, always enjoyed the college setting, so when the opportunity arose to serve in college ministry, he was thrilled. The campus minister at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, Taylor finds this ministry rewarding because it allows him to "stay connected with the academic world, while also helping students work with local churches and ministries."

As is the case with many who serve on a campus, Taylor is able to wear many hats, leading small groups and mentoring students while also teaching courses as an adjunct professor. "All of the biblical and theological studies classes I took at Beeson have been a great foundation for my ministry," he said. "They gave me the tools to teach Bible studies as



▲ James Drake baptizes a student

well as teach some OBU courses."

He finds his work incredibly rewarding because college students are at such a crucial stage in their faith development. "College students make choices about their calling and career, their spouse, and they often evaluate their own faith for the first time," Taylor said. That's why he believes strongly in teaching sound theology while also connecting college students to churches while they are students, rather than allowing the campus ministry to be their "church." This eases the inevitable struggle of watching students move on from their college ministry. "We find comfort in the hope that we have sent them out into churches where they are more faithful members because of what they have learned in college," he said.

James Drake, a 2010 graduate, affirms the value of remaining connected to faith while in school. In fact, that's what drew him to college ministry. "It is tragic that most Christians walk away from their faith during these four

years, because the college years set a person's life on a trajectory for the next 40 years," he said. "My life was changed in college because someone reached out to me with the Gospel, and it changed everything. I want that for today's college students" he said.

Drake, who leads the Campus Crusade (CRU) ministry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, has seen what began as a small Bible study become a citywide movement. Hundreds of students on the multicultural campus of UAB meet weekly for worship, small groups and ministry opportunities throughout the city. In his five years with CRU, 10 student leaders have become full-time Campus Crusade ministers, often working with the least reached communities on campus. That's what Drake finds so rewarding about college ministry. "Every week, I hear from a student whose life is being changed," he said. "I sense a real awakening here in Birmingham among college students."

When asked what advice he gives to others who work with college students, Drake recommends holding them

"It is tragic that most Christians walk away from their faith during these four years, because the college years set a person's life on a trajectory for the next 40 years."



accountable to the whole Gospel, when the world is telling them that truth is relative. “Unfortunately, most young Christians today do not have a biblical worldview, which sometimes leads to appalling lifestyle choices,” he said. “The best thing any Christian leader could do in helping the next generation of Christian leaders is to help them really understand the Gospel and what Christ had to say about ALL of life.”

A Succession of Leaders

One college ministry with unique Beeson ties is University Christian Fellowship in Birmingham. Originally founded in 1999 by Beeson alumnus Joel Brooks, UCF has flourished under the leadership of three Beeson graduates. Brooks, who began the ministry as a small Bible study in a home, saw God grow the ministry to several hundred students from campuses all over the city. Eventually, Mountain Brook Community Church partnered with UCF and built a state-of-the-art ministry facility on the church’s campus for round-the-clock college ministry. Today, 2011 Beeson Divinity School graduates Joel Busby and Suzanne Goddard serve as UCF director and assistant director, respectively.

Busby feels strongly that his Beeson education prepared him richly for ministry with college students. “Beeson teaches you how to really think deeply and grapple seriously with theological issues,” he said. “I believe that campus ministry requires a high-level of intellectual engagement because college students are so intellectually engaged.” Busby also appreciates the history and doctrine training that he received at Beeson. “Beeson’s emphasis in history and doctrine was key for me,” he said. “I believe campus ministers really need a historical-theological lens. College culture abounds with endless creativity, trendiness and edginess. It’s really

a hot-bed of extreme thinking. I find myself constantly thinking, ‘How has this way of thinking emerged over time?’ Beeson uniquely equipped me for this.”

Busby also acknowledges how much he gained by working with other Beeson alumni. Although, he did not work directly with Joel Brooks, he recognizes the legacy he created. “Joel saw a need for an environment for college students where God could be worshipped and the Word proclaimed,” he said. “I’ve heard stories of people who come up to Joel at conferences who are in ministry today and credit UCF as the beginning of their walk with Christ.” And, Busby also has glowing words about Andy Byers (M.Div. 2001), with whom he served for two years. “I think more than anything Andy forever redefined what pastoral ministry is for me. I saw the way he preached, taught, related, prayed for, pursued and confronted college students,” he said. “Andy taught me that a pastor is someone who cares, listens, thinks, struggles, writes, preaches and extends hospitality.”

College Ministry—A Family Affair

Many Beeson Divinity School alumni are called into ministry as a family. This is case for Brian and Renee (Lankford) Pitts, who met through student ministries at Samford University and married before they graduated from divinity school. While they knew they were both called to ministry, they assumed that they would work in different areas. Renee was drawn to social ministry, while Brian enjoyed the idea of church planting and creative ministry. But when Renee’s first job with the Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) included college ministry to a local community college, she called on Brian to help when he could. “It didn’t feel like work,” Brian commented. “I loved working with students and with Renee.”



▲ Brian Pitts teaches at Shiloh

The call to college ministry was born.

Both Brian’s and Renee’s parents worked together professionally, so they already had strong models for how to minister, work and parent together. Not long after leaving the BBA, Brian and Renee were each independently called to serve as part of the University Ministries staff at Samford. Renee came first, serving as a part-time missions coordinator. Brian came shortly after and serves as director of spiritual formation. Today, Renee continues to mobilize and educate students who are interested in local and international missions; she also directs a new Global Mission Scholarship program. One of Brian’s main areas of ministry is leading Shiloh, University Ministries’ weekly student worship service, which ministers to approximately 300 Samford students per week. He also oversees small groups and other campus-wide spiritual formation opportunities for faculty, staff and students.

The most unusual aspect to Brian and Renee’s ministry is that

they not only share a common ministry, they also share an office. “I usually get two reactions when people find out that we work so closely together,” Brian said. “Some think it sounds great, but most ask how in the world we could ever do that.” But, the unusual work dynamic has allowed them to model a healthy, Christian relationship to their students. They conduct many premarital sessions with young couples, some of which admit that they had not seen a healthy marriage until they met Brian and Renee.

It is these types of experiences that have led the Pittses to discover that God intended all along for them to serve as a team. While taking a student mission team to Southeast Asia last summer, they experienced something very profound and symbolic to confirm this. As they were preparing to return home, members of the church with whom they had ministered asked to pray for the team. They prayed for each student individually, but when they came to Brian and Renee, they joined their hands and prayed for them together.

“I realized for the first time that the uniqueness that Renee and I bring to ministry is what we bring as a team,” Brian said. “We came into college ministry with so little experience that he has grown us into a ministry unit. Her strengths complement and aid my weaknesses, and my strengths do the same for her.”

While Brian and Renee serve on a private, Christian campus, another alumni couple ministers to students in a much different environment. Jeff and Anna (Moseley) Gissing have served with Intervarsity Fellowship with graduate students at Duke, UNC–Chapel Hill and, most recently, Wake Forest.

Jeff and Anna met at Beeson Divinity School, where they discovered a common love for academics and the academic environment. “Jeff and I were attracted to campus ministry because we believe the university is an exciting place where new ideas gain influence and where

“I want to offer students the same opportunity to experience the transformative power of the Gospel that altered the trajectory of my life.”

◀ Renee Pitts serves communion to Samford students

cultural changes begin,” Anna explained. “One blessing of working with graduate and professional students is that they are more aware of God’s specific call on their lives. We have the exciting opportunity to help them integrate their faith with their academic discipline, equipping them to serve God with their whole lives,” she said.

The Gissings learned a great deal about faith integration from their time as divinity students. “At Beeson, I met faculty and fellow students who loved God with their minds,” Anna said. “This community of believers who valued learning and intellectual curiosity encouraged us to work with the university community to share Christ among those who work with ideas.”

Ministering in the Midst of a Storm

Each Wednesday night, more than 800 university students pack the auditorium at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, for a worship service known as “The Well.” This high-energy contemporary gathering is led by Calvary’s college minister, Chris Brooks, a 2004 alumnus who teaches and challenges students to embrace the Gospel with their whole lives. Brooks has always appreciated the profound impact college ministry had on his life. “College was such a crucial and formative time in my life, faith and friendships,” he said. “I want to offer students the same opportunity to experience the transformative power of the Gospel that altered the trajectory of my life.”

One of the things that Brooks finds the most rewarding about



▲ The Well at Calvary Baptist Church

“College Ministry within a church context starts in junior high and ends when they become leaders in their congregations.”

working with college students is their desire to share the Gospel holistically throughout the world as well as in their local community. Sadly, his students were given a profound way to touch their city, on April 27, 2011. Violent tornados ripped through Tuscaloosa, demolishing entire neighborhoods just blocks from Calvary Baptist’s campus. While some students were directly impacted, most sprung into action, assisting Brooks and the rest of the church staff with disaster relief. Calvary’s student space was quickly converted into a relief center where donations were collected and distributed, sometimes providing enough to completely refurbish homes.

Brooks saw his students put actions to their convictions, as well as witness the practical beauty of the local church. “Our tornado relief involvement seemed to highlight for them the importance of being consistently involved in a local church that is being consistently involved in the local community,” he said. As Tuscaloosa rebuilds,

Brooks and his students hope to continue to model Christ to many in need.

College Students at Church

For Brian Oaks, an interest in college ministry started while serving overseas after college. As part of a one-year ministry experience, he served on college campuses and began to engage students of different cultures. Upon returning to the United States, his calling to college ministry grew stronger. Today, he is the college minister at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

But Oaks, who received his M.Div. from Beeson Divinity School in 2009, considers college ministry just one of his callings. He is also a gifted artist and uses paintings he has created as teaching tools in Bible studies and worship times. This is one way he has discovered to engage postmodern college students who value creative expression in worship.

According to Oaks, effective college ministry must be organic and

relational. “College Ministry within a church context starts in junior high and ends when they become leaders in their congregations,” he said. That’s why he relates and invests personally in the lives of his students. He confesses that sometimes that is painful, as some students never seem to overcome particular struggles, while others stray from the faith. Conversely, one of the greatest benefits of college ministry to him is when he is able to see how that investment has taken shape in a student’s life many years after college.

Without exception, each of these graduates expressed the importance of the biblical knowledge they gained at Beeson Divinity School. Without it, they said, they would not be able to teach ever-inquisitive and increasingly provocative students the orthodox truths of the Bible. There is a unique mission field, one that will have profound effects on the future of the Kingdom of God. ✝

■ **Sherri Spurling Brown** (M.T.S. 2002) is the director of admission for Beeson Divinity School. After graduating from divinity school, she worked as a college and career minister for five years.

Carl Beckwith contributed “Introduction to An Ancient Christian Council at Gangra,” and “Introduction to Jerome’s Letter of Evagrius on the Power of the Pope,” to volume 59 of *Luther’s Works*, published by Concordia.

Gerald Bray edited *Galatians, Ephesians*, the first volume of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture to be released by IVP Academic. Bray also contributed the chapter “The Deity of Christ in Church History” to Crossway’s *The Deity of Christ*.

Timothy George’s book *Reading Scripture with the Reformers* was published by IVP Academic. His book *The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking*, coedited with David Dockery, will be released by Crossway in 2012.

Timothy George edited the book *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith* from Baker Academic. Other contributors include **Carl Beckwith, Gerald Bray, Mark DeVine, Mark Gignilliat,** and **Frank Thielman.**

David Hogg contributed the chapter “Carolingian Conflict: Two Monks on the Mass” to *The Lord’s Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, published by B&H.

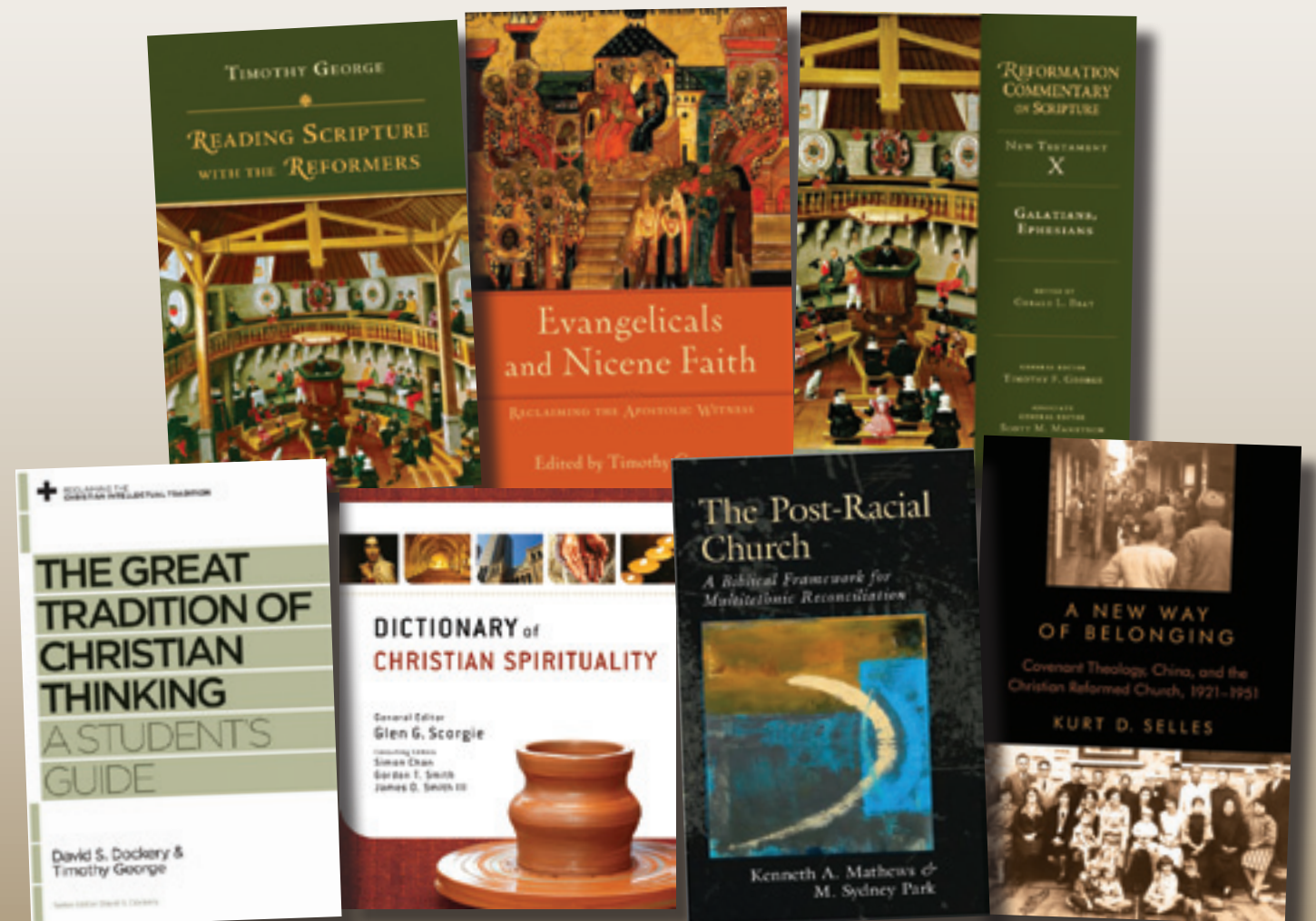
David Hogg and **Paul House** each contributed a chapter to *Great is Thy Faithfulness? Reading Lamentations as Sacred Scripture*, published by Pickwick Publications.

Gisela Kreglinger contributed to Zondervan’s *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen Scorgie.

Kregel published *The Post-Racial Church* by **Kenneth Mathews** and **Sydney Park**.

Kurt Selles’s book *A New Way of Belonging: Covenant Theology, China, and the Christian Reformed Church, 1920-1950* was published by Eerdmans.

Douglas Webster’s book *Table Grace: The Role of Hospitality in the Christian Life* was published by Christian Focus.



Beeson Portrait

Rob Willis

By Betsy Childs

Everyone at Beeson Divinity School is familiar with Rob Willis. They are accustomed to seeing him orchestrate the audio technology of chapel services from his perch in the balcony or slip into classrooms to help faculty members with their technical difficulties. He has salvaged more than a few crashed laptops for members of the divinity school community. Rob always helps unobtrusively, but Rob always helps.

Rob Willis was born in Long Island, New York to a Jewish family that he describes as “a-religious.” When he was still a newborn, his mother left him, his father, and his older brother. The family heard nothing from her for five years. His brother’s health was poor, and large medical bills forced their father to work back-to-back shifts in a hospital boiler room while Rob’s grandparents cared for him and his brother. Though his grandfather was opposed to religion, his

grandmother read him stories from the Old Testament.

Rob’s life changed dramatically when his father remarried and took his sons to live in the U.S. Virgin Islands. St. John was a beautiful island where the alcohol flowed freely, and Rob and his brother were given liberty to roam where they pleased. Rob took up music and started playing in bars when he was only 11 years old. He recalls, “I watched bright and talented people destroy their lives with alcohol and drugs, all before I even started high school.”

Rob left the Virgin Islands to study music composition at Berklee College in Boston, Massachusetts. In Boston, he encountered committed Christians for the first time in his life. He describes himself as an argumentative person, and he enjoyed trying to upset the Christians who reached out to him. He attended their Bible study just to be a nuisance. Although he also spent time with Buddhists, Moonies and Hare Krishnas, only the Christians were offensive to him because of their exclusive claims.

When Rob needed a New Testament text for a choral assignment, one of his Christian friends happily loaned a Bible to him. Rob recalls, “I was determined that I would read this book so I could find the holes in the Christians’ argument. Much to my amazement, I opened the New Testament and read these words ‘These are the generations of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.’ I was amazed to find the

names that my Grandmother had read me stories about were on the pages of book that I had been told was not a book for Jewish people. I read on differently, my curiosity aroused. Three months later, after much reading and wrestling, I completely surrendered my life to God.”

Rob met his wife, Vikki, in Boston, and together they ministered for several years at St. Francis House for the Homeless. Eventually, Rob and Vikki returned to St. John to serve as church planters. The island’s transient population made church planting difficult, but Rob and Vikki led evangelistic Bible studies for itinerant restaurant workers. Then Hurricane Marilyn struck.

The hurricane devastated the island, destroying 30 percent of homes and damaging many more. With no water or electricity, most of the population evacuated. Rob and Vikki, now expecting their first child, decided to move to Birmingham.

Rob enrolled at Beeson Divinity School in 1996 in order

to finish the master of divinity he had started in Boston at Gordon-Conwell. Someone offered him the job of chapel sound coordinator, a role he expected would take a few hours a week. That job grew and grew until it turned into a full-time position as Media and Technology Manager.

When Rob Willis came to Beeson, he found stacks of tapes that had been recorded in the school’s first eight years. He organized these, and thousands of other events and courses he has since recorded, into a media archive. Creating the media archive was important to Rob because, during their year as church planters in St. John, he and Vikki had relied on tapes from their home church in Boston to provide spiritual nourishment. Now, the recordings and videos that he and his staff make are available to people all over the world through the Beeson Divinity School website and podcasts.

Rob has continued to serve in church ministry as the pastor

of Brook Highland Community Church. This opportunity came about when the leadership of this aging congregation approached him in 2006 and asked him if he would consider merging the church that he had recently planted—which at the time was meeting in a barn—with theirs. This seemed like a timely request, especially since the weather would soon be getting too cold for meeting in a barn! Rob has pastored this united congregation for six years.

Rob says that he loves his job at Beeson Divinity School because he loves problem solving. When he trains the students who work for him, one of his mantras is “The difficult we can do right away; the impossible will take a few minutes.” Another is that 85% of tech support is moral support. Anyone on staff can attest that Rob’s willing attitude rubs off on his tech support team. He treats media and technology as ministry, and God multiplies the fruits of his labors. ✝



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Community News

News and Updates

Reformation Spirituality Conference

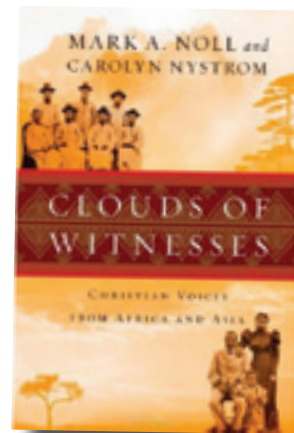


In October 2011, Beeson Divinity School hosted a Reformation Spirituality Conference in conjunction with Refo500, a multi-year project celebrating the relevance of the Reformation as a movement of renewal and change. Divinity faculty Carl Beckwith, Gerald Bray, Graham Cole, Gisela Kreglinger, Timothy George and Piotr Malysz presented papers, along with special guests Dr. Herman Selderhuis, from the Theological University of Apeldoorn, Netherlands, and Karla Apperloo-Boersma, Project Manager of Refo500. A highlight of the conference was an evening of Reformation music, presented by an ensemble from the Samford School of the Arts. Conference attendees enjoyed celebrating all aspects of Reformation spirituality, including hymnody, prayer, Scripture-reading and baptism.

To purchase a CD set from this conference, please contact Cokesbury's Beeson Bookshop at 205.726.2286

Noll, Nystrom Receive Pollock Award

The 2011 John Pollock Award for Christian Biography was awarded to Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom for their book **Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Asia and Africa** (IVP Books). The book tells the life stories of 17 Christian leaders from Asia and Africa. It includes the biographies of Ugandan martyr Janani Luwum (whose bust is among the martyrs in Hodges Chapel), Indian mystic Sundar Singh and Ignatius Cardinal Kung of China, as well as many lesser-known but equally inspiring figures.



This is the first time that the Pollock Award has been given to a book chronicling more than one life. *Clouds of Witnesses* is based on sound, scholarly research in world Christianity, while at the same time it tells engaging stories that will likely move the reader to doxology. The award will be presented on April 3, when Noll will be speaking in the divinity school chapel.

House President of ETS



Beeson Divinity School Professor **Paul R. House** serves as the 2012 President of the Evangelical Theological Society. ETS, which has over 4,000 members, is a professional, academic society for evangelical scholarship. House will give a presidential address at the 64th annual meeting of the society, which will be held November 14-16 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The theme of this meeting will be "Caring for Creation."

New Endowed Lecture Series on the Apostle Paul

On Sunday evening, September 23, 2012, Dr. Frank Thielman will present the first annual Milton G. Walker Church Lecture on the Apostle Paul. The Walker lecture series has been endowed by Mr. Ellis J. Parker in memory of his uncle, Milton G. Walker. Mr. Walker devoted his life to teaching Sunday school classes on St. Paul. The series will be held in churches throughout western Alabama where he ministered. Haleyville First Baptist Church will host the first lecture, which is open to the public. For more information contact Carolyn Lankford at 205-726-4480 or clankfor@samford.edu.

Divinity School Welcomes New Faculty

Beeson Divinity School welcomed three new faculty members in 2011.

Dr. David Hogg is associate dean for academics and associate professor of history and doctrine. Hogg is a medievalist and comes to the divinity school from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Dr. Piotr Malysz, originally from Poland, is assistant professor of history and doctrine. Malysz is an ordained Lutheran pastor who recently completed a doctorate at Harvard Divinity School.

Dr. Graham Cole joined the divinity school faculty as the Anglican Chair of Divinity. Cole is an Australian, and served as principle of Ridley College, University of Melbourne, as well as on the faculty of Moore Theological College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School before his appointment at Beeson Divinity School. Cole is a theologian who has written extensively on the Holy Spirit.



▲ Dr. Lyle Dorsett(right) prays for Dr. Graham Cole during opening convocation

Carolyn Lankford Joins Staff as Advancement Officer



The Beeson Divinity School community has been pleased to welcome **Carolyn K. Lankford** as its new advancement officer. Lankford previously served as a director of Christian education at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. She has been active in fundraising for Red Mountain Theatre Company and has served in several capacities on its board of directors.

Lankford is working to assemble a divinity school advisory board to expand the influence, reputation and resources of Beeson Divinity School. In addition to raising money for scholarships and special projects, she has also worked to establish a new BDS Fund, which will support the operating expenses of the divinity school.

Below, Lankford shares a bit about her background and why she is excited about her role at Beeson Divinity School.

I've been a member of the Church of the Advent in Birmingham for 24 years. I first learned about Beeson Divinity School 22 years ago when the dean of our church invited Dr. George to preach during our annual Lenten series. Since then, the Church of the Advent has benefitted from the preaching and teaching of numerous Beeson faculty members. For quite some time I have known that Beeson was a gem in my very backyard.

I accepted this position for several reasons, and I must say it was a very prayerful process for me. I had profound respect for Beeson Divinity School; I knew a bit about its caliber of academics and its commitment to propagating evangelical, orthodox, reformed Christianity. The idea of being a part of a community that was clearly focused and serious about the business of furthering God's Kingdom was very attractive to me. And, having spent the past five years as an executive board member with a growing non-profit organization, I had learned much about the work of development; most especially the revelation that when your "product" is one worthy of advancement, the job of raising funds is not just about asking for gifts, but also it is about introducing and connecting potential supporters to the good work in place and the good work yet to be done. In the case of Beeson Divinity School, I see doing just that as a privilege and a joy.

My husband, Frank, and I have been married for almost 23 years. He gave me the gift of a stepson, Frank (age 26), and together we have a son, Fred (age 19), and a daughter, Rebecca (age 16).

I am very excited about working at the divinity school. The faculty and staff here are people I respect very much, and I have many places to turn when I need guidance or reinforcement. I pray daily that God will continue to provide for Beeson, and I believe that He will. ✝

Beeson Alumni

News and Updates

Watkins and Richardson Named 2012 Distinguished Alumni



Daven Watkins (M.Div., 1999)
Daven Watkins received the Master of Divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School in 1999. He pastored a church in Owenton, Kentucky before becoming senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, Alabama in 2008. Watkins shepherded his congregation

through a period of devastating loss after the tornados of April 27, 2011 (you can read his story on page 10). Watkins is married to Jane Ellen, and they are the parents of Molly Grace and Nathan. Watkins' award was presented in a chapel service on February 7.

Wyman Richardson, Jr. (D.Min., 2004)
Wyman Richardson earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from Beeson Divinity School in 2004. He is the pastor of Central Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Richardson previously served churches in Georgia and Oklahoma. He is the author of *On Earth As It Is in Heaven* (Founders Press 2011) and *Walking Together: A Congregational Reflection on Biblical Church Discipline* (Wipf & Stock 2007), which was adapted from his D.Min. dissertation. Richardson and his wife, Roni, have one daughter, Hannah. Richardson's award will be presented during the 25th Beeson Pastors School in July.



Updates

Brandon Fredenburg (M.Div. 1993) is assistant dean of the College of Biblical Studies and Behavioral Sciences at Lubbock Christian University in his hometown of Lubbock, Texas.

John Cantelow (M.Div. 1994)



was elected senior pastor at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham on June 19, 2011. Cantelow is a student in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Beeson Divinity School.

Chris Callaway (M.Div. 1996)



is an assistant professor of philosophy at St. Joseph's College of Maine. He is also an adjunct instructor at Bangor Theological Seminary.

Anthony Chute (M.Div. 1996) was named associate dean of the School of Christian Ministries at California Baptist University in Riverside, Calif.



In May of 2011, he received the California Baptist University Distinguished Scholar of the Year award. His book *Father Mercer: The Story of a Baptist Statesman* was published by Mercer Press.

Douglas Ngatunyi (M.Div. 1996)



is working in a hospital in Kenya and preparing to launch a new ministry.

Connie L. Hedges (M.Div. 1997) has been serving as a chaplain at Logansport Juvenile Correctional Facility in Logansport, Ind., for 10 years. She also teaches Introduction to Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion for Ivy Tech Community College near Logansport.

Chad Sentell (M.Div. 1997) serves as manager of chaplain services with Alacare Home Health and Hospice based in Birmingham.

Dennis Aggrey (M.Div. 1999) lives and works in Liberia as the mission director of the Christian Revival Church Association, a group of cooperating Christian Revival churches in rural Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Kyle Quarterson (M.T.S. 1998) works as a church developer/planter with the International Mission Board in southern Africa.

Nelson Hannah (M.Div. 1999) planted Eagle's Wing Church in north Jefferson County, Ala.

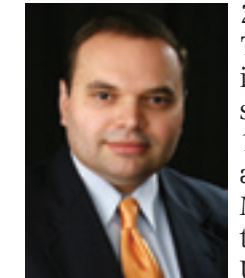


Daniel Thomas' (M.Div. 1999) book *The Beatitudes: The Way of the Kingdom* was published by Borderstone Press.

Greg Tucker (M.Div. 1999) is founder and president of Brave Heart Outpost, a "ministry of rescue and redemption, founded in Christ and rooted in community," located in Alabaster, Ala.



Oleg Turlac (M.Div. 1999, D.Min. 2006) moved to Toronto, Canada, in 2010 after serving for nearly 10 years as pastor and teacher in Moldova and the former USSR. He directs the Turlac Faith Ministries and serves as the editor of *Christian Megapolis* and *Perspectives*. He continues to minister to Christians in countries where they are persecuted for their faith.



Steve Echols' (D.Min. 2000) book *Catastrophic Crisis: Ministry Leadership in the Midst of Trial and Tragedy* was published by B&H. Echols was installed as president of Tennessee Temple University in 2012.

Andy Byers' (M.Div. 2001) book *Faith Without Illusions* was published by InterVarsity Press. Byers began doctoral work in New Testament at Durham University in 2011.



David Chambers (D.Min. 2001) is in his tenth year as senior pastor of First Baptist Church Fairview in Cullman, Ala. He also serves as moderator for the East Cullman Baptist Association.

Josh Dear (M.Div. 2001) is



assistant pastor at Lakeside Baptist Church in Muskegon, Mich.

Mark Flores (M.Div. 2001) has served as pastor at Mount Hermon Baptist Church in Bedford, Va., since 2005. He has been a chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve since 2001 and was promoted to major in December of 2010.

Matt Hampton (M.Div. 2001)



is pastor of McFarland United Methodist Church in Rossville, Ga. He earned a doctor of ministry degree from the University of the South in 2011.

Dean Smedley (M.Div. 2002) is assistant director for student center operations at Augusta State University in Augusta, Ga.

Melody Maxwell (M.Div. 2003) completed a doctor of philosophy in church history from the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic.

Brian Peterson (M.T.S. 2003) joined the faculty of Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn., as assistant professor of Old Testament.

Jon Dockery (M.T.S. 2004) is business manager at *Touchstone Magazine: A Journal of Mere Christianity* based in Chicago, Ill.

R. David Nelson



(M.Div. 2004) was awarded a Ph.D. in systematic theology at King's College, University of Aberdeen. He is an acquisitions editor for Baker Academic and Brazos Press in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jon Parks (M.Div. 2004) and his wife, Tania, were commissioned with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to serve in Kosice, Slovakia. They will work alongside English teachers at an all-Roma private school.

Maurice Watson (D.Min. 2006) was one of the plenary speakers at the 2011 Beeson Pastors School. Watson is pastor of Beulahland Bible Church in Macon, Ga.

Rob Foley (M.T.S. 2006) joined the staff of Denver Seminary as the community life coordinator.



Derrick Hammond (M.Div. 2006) accepted the position of church business administrator at First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, Va.



Keith Ray (M.Div. 2006) is senior pastor at Arbor Baptist Church in Pell City, Ala.

Jim Wallace (D.Min. 2006) works as a fellow and senior research associate at the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs at Boston University. He is the coauthor of the "Emerging Evangelical Intelligentsia Project."

Skip Alexander (D.Min. 2007) was appointed senior pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Ind.

Brad Barnett (M.T.S. 2007) serves as director of Servant Life (an initiative of Student Life) in Birmingham.

Christian George (M.Div. 2007) is assistant professor of religion at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla. He earned a doctorate from St. Mary's College at the University of St. Andrews.

Rebecca George (M.T.S. 2007) was named residence director of Taylor Residence Center and West University Apartments at Oklahoma Baptist University.



Jennifer Rash (M.T.S. 2007) was named executive editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Graham Hill (M.Div. 2008) was promoted to senior director of event management with Student Life.

Jared Smith (M.Div. 2008) serves at Redstone Church in Birmingham, Ala., as the service programming director.

Brian "Spike" Burt (M.Div. 2009) works at the Jimmie Hale Mission in Birmingham, teaching basic math, English and reading skills. He also serves as a chaplain.

Jon Gilliland (M.Div. 2009) serves as youth minister at Antioch East Baptist Church in Greenville, Ala.

Jacob Simmons (M.Div. 2009) left his position as alumni relations officer at Beeson Divinity School to work with the North American Mission Board and Send Chicago in Chicago, Ill.



He will also be a church planter in residence at Armitage Baptist Church in Logan Square.

Jimmy Gill (M.Div. 2010) is associate pastor of Fullness Christian Fellowship in Birmingham.



Whit Goodwin (M.Div. 2010) is director of student life at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas.



Mike Motta (M.Div. 2010) serves as minister of youth and children at First Baptist Church Shawmut in Valley, Ala.

Daniel Williams (M.Div. 2010) began doctoral work in American history at Auburn University in 2011. He was ordained at Free Will Baptist Church of Eastman, Ga.

Andrew Bolger (M.Div. 2011) is campus minister at the College of the Ozarks in Lookout, Mo.

Tony Sconza (M.Div. 2011) serves as groups director at Browns Bridge Community Church in Cummings, Ga.

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Sojourning Together

By Osvaldo Padilla

When Moses Lartey told me he wanted to do his cross-cultural assignment at my church, Iglesia Bautista Jesús el Buen Pastor, I had some doubts. The doubts did not have to do with Moses himself — he had been one of my students and I knew him to be diligent, spiritually mature and respected. The concerns had to do with the setting. You see, the church I attend is an exclusively Spanish-speaking congregation in Birmingham. The congregation is made up of Hispanics from Central America and Mexico; they are poor, only about half possess minimal reading and writing skills, and most speak very little English. What did they have in common with an African-American student from Beeson Divinity School? Would the cultural differences just be too great? And what about the language? How could this significant barrier be overcome?

We decided to give it a shot anyway, settling on preaching as his primary activity. I would perform the translation of the sermons (an activity that, I would discover, required significant energy given Moses' vigorous preaching style!).

And so we began on a Wednesday evening. The rumor had spread among the members that we would have a Beeson student ministering for the next few weeks, and thus there was a high attendance on that first Wednesday. I should mention

that, generally speaking, folks from Central America tend to be reserved and soft-spoken. The contrast between their quiet demeanor as they listened and Moses' beautifully passionate and animated delivery was tremendous. Their eyes grew big as Moses preached while walking through the congregation and even as he sat down in one of the pews and continued preaching for a few minutes from there. They loved it. As the weeks went by, the initial delight in Moses' different preaching style turned into deep affection between minister and congregation that went far beyond delivery style. I could sense that a special bond was forming.

Moses' ministry at our church eventually came to a close. On his final evening with us, the ladies of the church produced a variety of delicious Hispanic dishes, and we all sat down and shared a meal. It was time for the church to express thanksgiving to God for Moses. What did they appreciate? A number of things were said, but two remained with me. They appreciated that this dear brother could empathize with their status as sojourners in a foreign land. For Moses had been born in Liberia, Africa, and, like them, had been a stranger in this land. He encouraged them to remain faithful to the Lord despite often being mischaracterized by politicians and despite having to live in the margins of society.

The other area of appreciation was Moses' faithfulness to



▲ Moses Lartey

Scripture. They said, "This brother preached the Bible." For them, their common belief in the Bible and the Gospel provided unity and love.

I was deeply satisfied as I reflected on how, in a city that has been so broken by racial differences, in a little corner of Lorna Road in Hoover, Alabama, God, through his church, was providing a beautiful picture of what the Gospel can accomplish. ✝

■ Osvaldo Padilla teaches Greek and New Testament at Beeson Divinity School.

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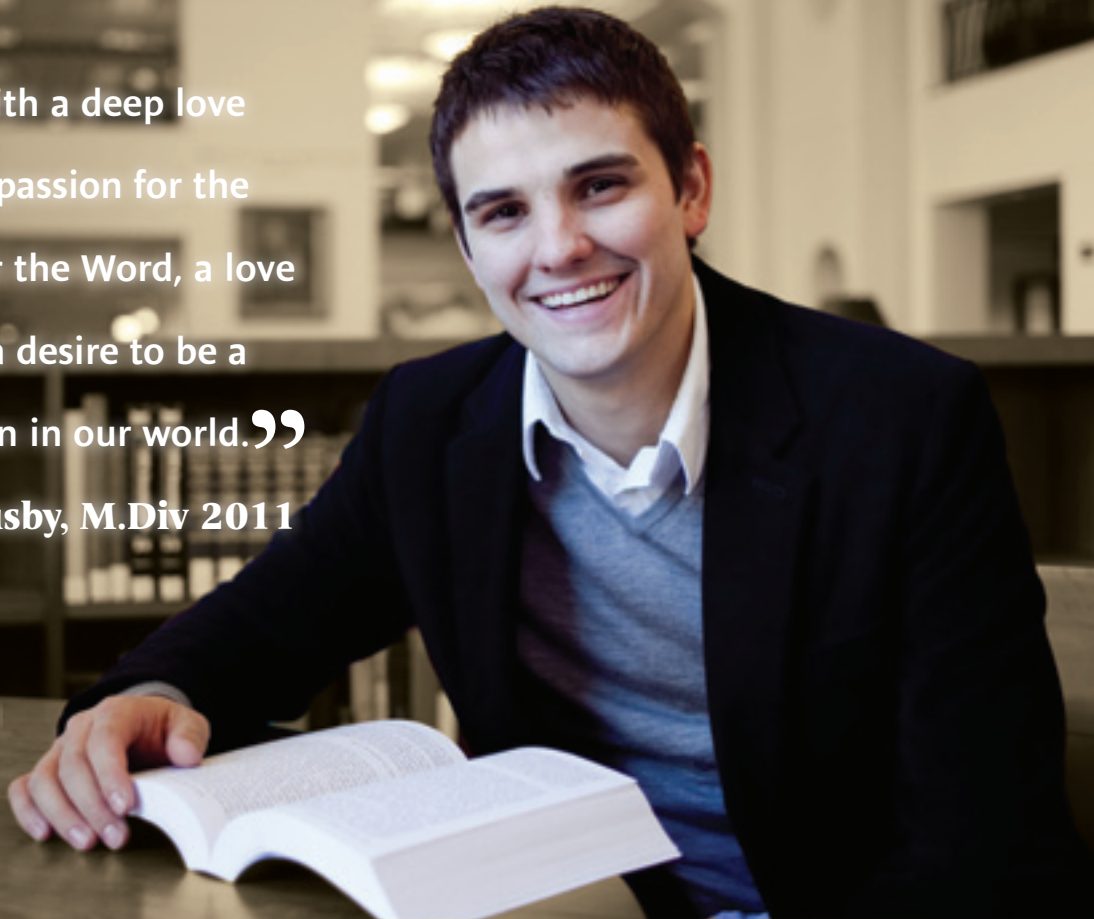
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