



the Bridge

VOLUME 48 ▶ NUMBER 3 ▶ FALL 2007

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'The Kingdom of God' to Focus Graduate School Year

A casual reading of the synoptic gospels reveals that the central theme of Jesus' ministry is "the kingdom of God," or as Matthew preferred, "the kingdom of heaven." In both Matthew and Mark, the ministry of Jesus begins with the proclamation, "The kingdom of God (or heaven) has come near" (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15). In Luke, Jesus' ministry begins with the reading of Isaiah 61:1-2, after which Luke simply expounds on the implications of the coming of the kingdom: Jesus has come to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, set the oppressed free, and proclaim the cancellation of debts at the Year of Jubilee.

During the last century, a basic scholarly consensus emerged concerning the meaning of "the kingdom of God." In both Hebrew and Greek, the term "kingdom" refers primarily to the authority of rule and only secondarily to the territory over which this rule is exercised.

Synonyms for "the kingdom of God" include "the reign of God" or "the rule of God." The Lord's Prayer illustrates this understanding as "your kingdom come," which is parallel to "your will be done" (Matthew 6:10). For God's kingdom to come is the same as for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What would it look like for God's reign to break into a world under the curse of sin and authority of Satan? In Jesus' ministry sins are forgiven, and estranged humans reconciled to God and each other. Injustices are confronted, and outcasts welcomed. Diseases are healed, and demons cast out. Death is defeated, and the call of discipleship issued. People are invited to receive and participate in the work of God, but a decision must be made. One cannot live under the reign of God and the reign of Satan. While the kingdom of God was brought into the world in a decisive way during Jesus' ministry, we anticipate its final inauguration at Christ's return.

The kingdom ministry of

Jesus has important implications for the life of the church. While the kingdom of God and church are often equated, this view does not do justice to the separate-but-related nature of these terms in the New Testament. The church is the people of God who live under, proclaim and anticipate the reign of God. A kingdom outlook calls into question any reductionism or compartmentalization of Christian life, as well as simplistic debates over the priority of worship versus mission or evangelism versus social action. A kingdom outlook brings the whole of the Christian life together in a profound way and calls for a radical commitment of allegiance.

As we meditate on this rich theme in our annual events, daily chapel, classes, informal conversations and private devotions, may God's spirit mold us as kingdom people and form within us a kingdom vision for the world.

▶ Dr. Mark Powell is associate professor of theology. (mpowell@hugsr.edu)

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Bridge Volume 48, Number 3
Fall 2007

The Bridge is published quarterly by Harding University's Graduate School of Religion for alumni, students, prospective students, contributors and friends.

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Dean's Note

Power of the Kingdom

Paul encourages churches in Asia to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10). The NRSV renders it “in the strength of his power.” Earlier in the letter he told the church that they had access to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (1:19-23); a power that blessed Paul’s life with grace (3:7); a power that reaches deep into our life through the Spirit (3:16); and a power to understand the love of Christ (3:20). It is a power that we receive, not create; a power that we accept and trust.

The power of his own example comes through when Paul meets with the elders from Ephesus for the last time (Acts 20:18-38). If we could produce a movie about the power of the kingdom in Paul’s life, it would be filled with surprises. How could a man who faced constant trials from his own people for “preaching the kingdom,” who cried often, who worked hard with his own hands to support himself and his companions, and who gave more than he received really have much power? But he did, even on us today.

When I institutionalize the terms “power” and “kingdom,” I have difficulty connecting the dots. When I see these terms in light of “influence” and “authority,” they make more sense. The power in Paul’s story of his own life in Ephesus influenced the hearts of the shepherds. The presence of God came very close to anyone whose heart was open to submission to the authority of God revealed in the preaching of the kingdom and the word of grace.

We all know that it is difficult to read hearts — but it is not difficult to inspect the

The presence of God came very close to anyone whose heart was open to submission to the authority of God revealed in the preaching of the kingdom and the word of grace.

fruit of those hearts. Within the church there are those who tear down and those who build up. Some leaders assume power to control while others assume God will always be in control. Outside the church, there are those who persecute believers and those who respect believers. Some challenge all authority until they have all the answers, while others recog-



HUFFARD

nize an authority greater than themselves.

The real spiritual war may be waged more in the theater of human hearts than in minds. I rejoice when I see examples of the church influencing the world. It is disturbing to see the world shaping the thoughts and hearts of the church. There must be a difference between the two kingdoms. Our awareness of the difference defines our mission. For Paul, it can be found in the power

of Christ’s own example of giving more than he received.

Training in ministry is training in giving. It is a craft of the heart as much as an exercise of the mind. While there are

many things that concern me about the future of the church in the United States, none concern me more than the influence the world has in hardening our hearts against committing ourselves in humble, faithful service to a God whose kingdom knows no boundaries in time and space.

▶ Dr. Evertt W. Huffard
(dean@hugsr.edu)

Meet the Student Association

The Student Association for the 2007-08 school year was elected in April and took office May 5. *The Bridge* is proud to highlight these campus leaders.

PRESIDENT

Daniel McGraw

Undergraduate school:

Harding University

Major: Psychology;

vocational ministry

Ministry goal: Missions

Hometown: Memphis

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?
To prepare myself for ministry by learning more about God's word and developing relationships and friendships with other ministers in God's kingdom.

quickdrawd@hotmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Rusty Woods

Undergraduate school: Freed-

Hardeman University

Major: Biblical studies

Ministry goal:

Missions/church planting

Hometown: Dyersburg, Tenn.

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

My faith was the size and weight of a mustard seed. While that is all it takes, according to Jesus, I knew he did not intend for our faith to remain that tiny. For me, the Graduate School of Religion was and is faith fertilizer.

rusty.woods@gmail.com

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Glen Bowman

Undergraduate school:

University of California at

Berkeley

Major: Psychology

Ministry goal: Win as many

souls as I can

Hometown: Tustin, Calif.

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?
To learn to be more like Christ and know more of the Word.

glenbowman15@hotmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Bob Turner

Undergraduate school:

Harding University

Major: Bible and religion

Ministry goal: Local church

ministry, preferably in the Northeast

Hometown: Amherst, Ohio

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

My undergraduate professors recommended that I come.

bturner00@yahoo.com

SINGLES' REPRESENTATIVE

Angela Rusk

Undergraduate school:

Harding University

Major: Youth and family

ministry; Spanish

Ministry goal: Long-term missions in Latin America, reaching out to troubled youth.

Hometown: Searcy, Ark.

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

I wanted to come to a school where I could receive a solid foundation in counseling and prepare for the mission field at the same time. I also wanted to be part of the Graduate School of Religion community, where I could build relationships that would support me both as a student and in future ministry.

angelajrusk@yahoo.com

MARRIED, OFF-CAMPUS REPRESENTATIVE

Jonathan Teel

Undergraduate school:

Harding University

Major: Bible and religion;

Spanish

Ministry goal: Mission work, church planting with Hispanics, and/or counseling

Hometown: Buenos Aires, Argentina

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

I felt that the professors would be able to help me prepare to accomplish my goals and dreams of church planting.

teelman@aol.com

MARRIED, ON-CAMPUS REPRESENTATIVE

Caleb A. Borchers

Undergraduate school:

Harding University

Major: Biblical languages; youth and family ministry

Ministry goal: To work with small churches, possibly in a missions context

Hometown: Clarkston, Mich.

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

I felt like the Graduate School of Religion had the best mixture of academic quality, spiritual growth opportunity and Christian community.

cab647@gmail.com

COUNSELING REPRESENTATIVE

Justin Lewis

Undergraduate school:

Murray State University

Major: Social work

Ministry goal: Use my talents to promote and enrich healthy families and to comfort individuals in need.

Hometown: Paducah, Ky.

Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

To be trained as a counselor from a Christian perspective. I wanted to have a grasp on my spirituality as I prepared to be a comforter to others.

justinlewis10@hotmail.com



STUDENT ASSOCIATION OFFICERS:
Turner, Woods, McGraw, Bowman



STUDENT ASSOCIATION
REPRESENTATIVES: Teel, Borchers,
Rusk, Lewis

BRIEFS

Professors Address Scholars' Conference

Three Graduate School of Religion faculty members participated in the Christian Scholars' Conference at Rochester College in June.

Dr. Evertt Huffard was a responder to Philip Jenkins' *Global Christianity in the Restoration Movement: Sir Garfield Todd's Dream of an African Democracy*. Dr. Mark Powell read a paper titled "Rationality and Christian Belief: The Resurrection of



BLAND Jesus as Case Study." Dr. Dave Bland served as a leader for the session addressing "The Formation of Character in Proverbs" and read a paper titled "The Role of Human Interaction in the Process of Character Formation."

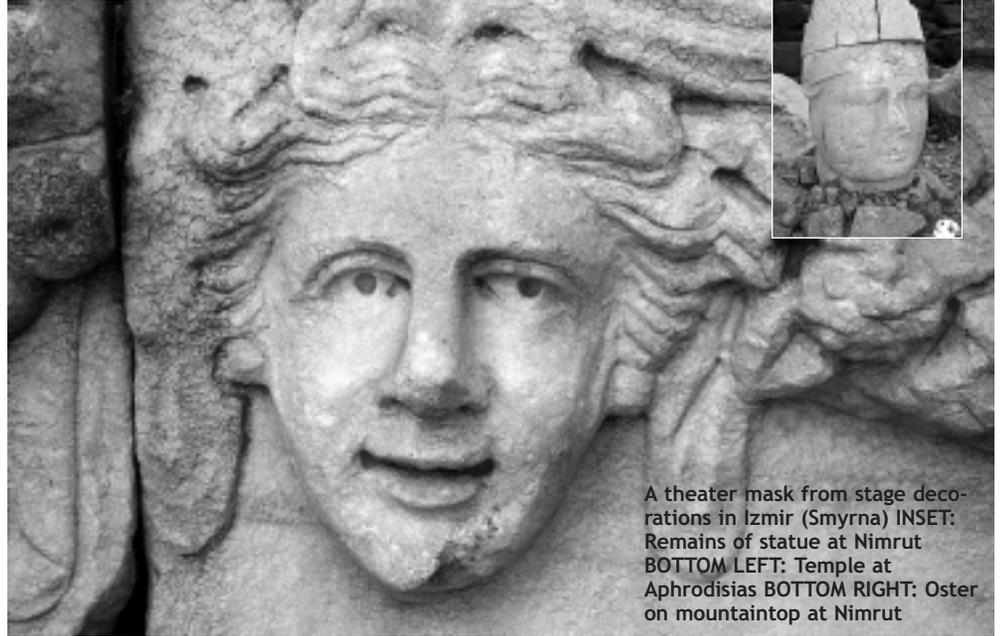
McMillion Speaks in Congregations

Dr. Phil McMillion has presented seminars on biblical archaeology and select Old Testament passages at churches in Memphis and North Mississippi. He also completed the article "Og of Bashan" for New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.



McMILLION

Faculty



A theater mask from stage decorations in Izmir (Smyrna) INSET: Remains of statue at Nimrut BOTTOM LEFT: Temple at Aphrodisias BOTTOM RIGHT: Oster on mountaintop at Nimrut

Oster Seeks Revelation in Turkey

It began in 1974, continued this summer, and will soon come to fruition. Dr. Richard Oster, professor of New Testament, traveled in June to remote parts of Eastern Turkey to research his long-anticipated commentary on the book of Revelation.

"I've been traveling to Turkey for many years, but typically have stayed in the west, near the seven churches," he says. This summer, however, Oster concentrated his work in areas between the Meander and Euphrates rivers. "I wanted to explore museums and sites that have bearing on the background of the emperor cult in Asia Minor," he explains.

Specifically, he was gathering information about Roman imagery and symbols in Asia Minor. What he found was a mixture of Roman, Greek and Persian images coming together in artifacts dating from the Roman period.

This trip, and his previous trips, will all come to bear on his commentary. "More than most English commentaries, mine will focus on the application of information from ancient literary sources and material culture." The book will have a large number of photos and illustrations contemporary to the New Testament. (Many commentaries rely heavily on later, medieval images to illuminate

the text.) A DVD with photos and text will accompany the commentary.

Asia Minor in the first century was filled with visual images celebrating the worship of the monarch, as evidenced in the material Oster explored on this trip. Since Revelation is itself full of imagery, Oster's work will be a significant contribution to biblical studies, using first-century imagery to interpret the images of Revelation.



Sales of Church Buildings Bless Ministry Leaders for Generations

No one is happy to hear of a church closing its doors. But in several instances, that occurrence has turned into a blessing for students preparing for ministry at the Graduate School of Religion.

The Graduate School of Religion now has several endowed scholarships that came directly from the sale of church buildings when congregations consolidated or closed, according to Larry Arick (larick@hugsr.edu), director of advancement.

The Henning Church of Christ in Ripley, Tenn., established a fund to support students. The Marks, Miss., Church of Christ established a fund to support ministers and missionaries.

When MacGregor Park

congregation in Houston merged with Bellfort congregation, they established a fund to support students preparing for ministry. And Quince Road congregation in Memphis established a fund with a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the building.

“We would rather congregations remain active,” Arick emphasizes. “But when facing the reality of selling a building, the leaders of that congregation have a wonderful opportunity to bless ministry leaders for generations to come.”

In a unique case, Utah Valley Church of Christ in Orem sold its building and established a fund. Harding University administers the funds, and a Graduate School of Religion student receives a portion each year. The rest of the fund, however, is

designed to encourage students from Utah to attend universities associated with churches of Christ. Two scholarships have been awarded to undergraduate students, one at Oklahoma Christian and one at Harding.

“This is a very unusual arrangement,” Arick notes. “But it allows students in Utah to receive the blessing of Christian education and at the same time allows the Graduate School of Religion to support ministers and missionaries who will serve around the world.”

By establishing an endowed fund, congregations ensure the love and money they have put into the church building will bear meaningful fruit long after the building has been sold.



Arick receives a check from church leaders in Orem, Utah, to establish a scholarship fund from the proceeds of their church building sale.

Church Leader Passes

Nationally known Memphis church leader Nokomis Yeldell died June 16. Yeldell was minister emeritus and elder at Norris



YELDELL

Road church of Christ in Memphis.

Yeldell was to be honored at the annual Leadership Council dinner Sept. 29. At the family's request, the dinner will still be held to remember the works of Yeldell and his late wife, Dollie.

To attend the \$50-per-plate dinner, please contact Larry Arick at hgsadvancement@hugsr.edu or (901) 761-1355.

As a long-time supporter of the Graduate School, it is appropriate that the dinner in his honor marks the establishment of the Nokomis and Dollie Yeldell Endowed Scholarship Fund. Friends who are unable to attend the dinner are invited to send gifts to Yeldell Endowment Fund, 1000 Cherry Road, Memphis, TN 38117.

Pie Auction

Make plans to attend the annual chili supper and pie auction hosted by Associated Women for Harding at 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 20, at the Church of Christ at White Station. For tickets or more information, contact Jeannie Alexander at (901) 761-1355.

BRIEFS

ATS Self-Study Begun

Dr. Steve McLeod, registrar, is leading the team conducting the current self-study required as part of our continuing accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools. The two-year process involves evaluation and data-driven improvements and includes alumni and students in addition to nearly every faculty and staff member. The team consists of representatives from the faculty, staff, students, alumni and donors.



MCLEOD

Priority Deadlines for Admissions Applications

Applications for spring 2008 should be submitted by Oct. 1, 2007.

Applications for summer or fall 2008 should be submitted by March 1, 2008.

Scholarship applications for the 2008-09 school year are also due March 1, 2008.

All applications are available under the admissions link at www.hugsr.edu.

Campus Events

Prospective Students Invited to *Connections*, Fall Preview Day

Make plans for Nov. 1 to attend *Connections*, an opportunity to preview the Graduate School of Religion and connect with future classmates, professors and mentors.

You will begin with a chance to learn about your opportunities at the Graduate School of Religion. You also can participate in the annual W.B. West Jr. Lectures, hosted

by the Student Association.

In addition, if you attend *Connections* and turn in an application for admission that day, your \$40 admissions fee will be waived.

Join us at the Graduate School of Religion and connect with friends who share your vision of ministry and your heart for kingdom service.

For more information about *Connections*, visit www.hugsr.edu.

CONNECTIONS SCHEDULE

Nov. 1	
3 p.m.	Registration and reception
3:45	Campus tours
4:15	Your opportunities for leadership transformation
4:45	Break-out groups with faculty and students
5:30	World-famous Memphis BBQ dinner
7-9	West Lectures

Ferguson to Speak at Annual Lectures

The Student Association will host the annual W.B. West Jr. Lectures at 7 p.m. Nov. 1. The lecture series addresses the school's yearly theme.

The guest speaker will be Dr. Everett Ferguson, speaking on "The Kingdom of God." Ferguson is professor of church history emeritus at

Abilene Christian University. His numerous academic and scholarly honors include an



FERGUSON

honorary John Harvard Fellowship, Harvard Graduate School Fellowship, Ph.D. "with distinction" from Harvard, and selection as the John G.

Gammie Senior Lecturer by Southwest Commission for Religious Studies. He is a member of the Council of the Association internationale d'études patristiques and past president of the North American Patristics Society.

Of particular note are Ferguson's *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* and *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*.

Turner Joins Admissions Team

Bob Turner joined admissions staff as a half-time recruiter this fall. His work focuses on undergraduate students.

Turner served as a graduate assistant in admissions for the past two years and already knows many prospec-

tive students.



TURNER

“Bob brings with him fresh energy and perspectives,” says Mark Parker, assistant vice president. “Few people I’ve

seen have the remarkable ability to connect with others like Bob can. He will be an important resource for students considering ministry and looking for excellent training.”

Turner can be reached at (800) 680-0809 or rjturner@hugsr.edu.

Altrock Leads Let's Start Talking Ministry

What began as a simple invitation to church in Las Cruces, N.M., has helped bring spiritual transformation literally around the world. It was the first time anyone had talked to him about Jesus.

Accepting that invitation in 10th grade was the first step Craig Altrock (D.Min., 2005; craig.altrock@lst.org) took toward leading the Let's Start Talking ministry decades later.

"Let's Start Talking equips and mobilizes Christians to share their faith and their lives in mission settings around the world," Altrock explains. As director of project development, he helps oversee all aspects of the ministry's year-round mission projects. In particular, Altrock leads training, site support and development of materials.

"The best part of my job is equipping, sending out and shaping over 400 Christians, plus the people those Christians will work with," he says.

In 2006, 100 LST teams of 435 Christians studied the Bible and shared their lives with more than 4,000 non-Christians at 64 sites in 29 countries.

Altrock first participated as an LST volunteer while in Memphis working on his master of divinity degree. "I had shied away from missions," he says. "But the campus ministry in Memphis where I worked asked me and Leslee to lead a team. I said 'no.' Leslee said 'yes.' So

we went!"

Reflecting on that first trip, he sees that summer as a life-changing experience. "We saw how good [the summer project] was for mission churches, the sites where teams worked," he remembers. "This is such a high-quality ministry. It's very thoughtful, with good training and a clear plan. There is good organization and lots of vision."

After earning his master of divinity and working at LST, Altrock began to work on his doctor of ministry while still leading the Fort Worth-based ministry. "I came to the Graduate School again because I have a sense that it approaches things with excellence."

His dissertation in the doctor of ministry program focused on the long-term effect of short-term mission projects on the workers themselves.

"We found that positive changes toward missions increased as time went on," he reports. "The short-term project was not a mountaintop experience, but a life-changing experience that shapes their choices from then on."

Regardless of what career paths the workers chose, their attitudes toward mission work improved. "We saw that this ministry is about shaping

the workers' trajectories."

Shaping ministry trajectories is a trait shared by LST and the Graduate School of Religion. "Both Leslee and I think of the Graduate School as a unique place of learning and growth that you can't find in many places. We've both been greatly shaped by our experience there."

This summer an LST worker reported from Japan about a 30-year-old woman who had never been allowed to talk about God in her family. The worker was overwhelmed by the questions, but at the end of the ministry, that non-Christian told the LST worker, "God sent you to me to answer my questions about God."

For Altrock, what started with a simple invitation to church in 10th grade has blossomed into a ministry of equipping Christians to transform lives and be transformed in the process. Like the Graduate School's mission, his is a ministry of transforming leaders.

[Editor's Note: Altrock's dissertation, *The Shaping of God's People: One Story of How God is Shaping the North American Church Through Short-Term Missions*, may be purchased at <http://www.lulu.com/content/388766>.]



Craig and Leslee Altrock



Altrock in front of the Debrecen, Hungary, high school that housed the LST Bible studies in 2007.

LEFT: Altrock (kneeling, near right) with the small, but mission-minded church in Miskolc, Hungary.



Windows Reveal 50 Years of Leadership

In a recent upgrade to the Ijams Administration Building, we replaced the windows throughout the main floor. The building is a former mansion, so the 1930s-era windows were heavy wood. The new ones are sleek, easier to clean, and double insulated.

It was a good, important upgrade.

Many people found the discarded windows and put them to good use. Some windows became wall decorations, and I spent several hours this summer hanging a large, heavy pair on my dining room wall. Some became picture frames. Some became works of art.

They're all claimed now, but as we removed the windows, I could not help but think about all that these windows had seen, and who had looked through them.

We replaced the windows in Dr. Huffard's office — the same office in which all of our deans have worked. If we were to look through those windows, we would see 50 years of deans talking and praying with

students, faculty and friends of the school. We would see the blood, sweat and tears they each poured into their job of making the Graduate School of Religion a place for leaders to come and be transformed.

The windows in Dr. Jack Lewis's office were replaced as well. He has looked out on the front of the campus for more than 50 years — seeing students come into the school and then seeing them leave more mature, better equipped for ministry.

Even the windows in the chapel were replaced. You can peer in and see a place of prayer and worship in which the campus community gathers to remember that all of our academics are more than simply academic.

The most important thing you would see by looking through the windows would be the people. Men and women — faculty, staff, students — all committed to building the kingdom of God one leader at a time.

▶ *Mark Parker*
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