



# the Bridge

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Harding University  
Graduate School of Religion  
1000 Cherry Road  
Memphis, TN 38117  
www.hugsr.edu

## Occupational Hazards

We all know the concept of occupational hazards. Policemen and their families, for example, suffer from a higher rate of divorce than the general population because of their occupation. Health care workers have to wear masks and latex gloves to protect them from the danger of virus-laden body fluids because of their occupation. Those in positions of spiritual leadership are no different. Because of their occupation, they too work under the cloud of occupational hazards. Self-assurance and pride are fatal occupational hazards with which all of God's leaders must deal, and these are always crouching at the door.

There are three insidious ways that these occupational hazards all too frequently express themselves. The most deadly manifestation is self-deception. This is often found among leaders who are clear about the reality of occupational hazards but are certain that they themselves are exempt from the hazard. This is similar to a teenager's flawed sense of his or her own invincibility. Teenagers usually don't doubt the existence of the dangers their teachers and

parents warn them about. They are just certain none of the warnings apply to them individually. These leaders have eyes and ears but just can't see or hear. History tells us that Roman generals, in the midst of their triumphs after great military conquests, were followed by a slave saying *memento mori*, "remember that you too are mortal."



OSTER  
too have feet of clay.

The "Rehoboam complex," where a leader basically takes advice only from those who are like-minded, is a second manifestation of deadly occupational hazards. Rehoboam did not realize that truth always loves an open arena, and a godly leader has nothing to fear from the open examination of his ideas, even in the presence of those who are not like-minded. Every great tyrant and dictator in history had an inner circle of people who flattered him, agreeing with his visions and plans.

Finally, leaders are seduced

by their own success to the point that the plans and goals they have devised become so important that these ends justify the means to accomplish them. Too many leaders have embraced, or at least tolerated, unprincipled, unjust and ungodly means to accomplish the goals and plans that they have desired. Scripture teaches that it is better to be a menial laborer in a kingdom that lives out the righteousness of God than a prominent leader in a Christian organization or church that mimics the culture of the world's great corporations and entrepreneurs.

Attempts to hide from the reality and consequences of these occupational hazards by God's leaders will be no more successful today than the attempt by Adam and Eve, God's first leaders, to hide from God among the trees of the garden. What a foolish scene, attempting to escape the all-seeing eye of the Creator of the Universe by hiding behind some vegetation. Our attempts to deny the hazards of the occupation of leadership seem equally foolish and immature.

▶ Dr. Richard Oster (roster@hugsr.edu), professor of New Testament, is nationally known for his presentations on Pauline letters and Revelation.

»training ministers »enriching faith »transforming leaders

## Harding University Graduate School of Religion

Admissions  
(800) 680-0809  
hgsadmissions@hugsr.edu

Advancement  
hgsadvancement@hugsr.edu

The Bridge editor  
(901) 761-1356

HUGSR fax  
(901) 761-1358

Web site  
www.hugsr.edu

Dean's office  
dean@hugsr.edu

Registrar's office  
registrar@hugsr.edu

Library  
hgslib@hugsr.edu

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Editor  
Mark Parker

Contributors  
Larry Arick, Evertt W. Huffard

Photo Credits  
Jeff Montgomery, Mark Parker

Newsletter Production  
Tom Buterbaugh, April Fatula

Harding University  
Graduate School of Religion  
1000 Cherry Road  
Memphis, TN 38117

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»»enriching*faith*

»»transforming*leaders*

## Dean's Note

# Memory & Mission

**A**nalytical critical thinking comes more naturally to me than reflection and remembering details. Experience teaches me that both are extremely essential for effective ministry. The first is essential for problem solving, organization and developing strategies. The second is essential for building relationships, locking onto a mission in life, and caring for people.

Some students may complain that final exam week is more about memorization than adequately assessing what they learned. They could be right. Educators have long debated the effectiveness of our testing methods in adequately assessing learning and development, yet I know without testing accountability seems to decline.

A much greater dimension of memory that motivates us to commit to greater service is what really intrigues me. It is the memory of need. I see this in students who are developing mission teams for Australia, Cambodia and Africa. I see this in those who are already on the mission field and in students serving the poor. I see it in the Doctor of Ministry candidates who are faithfully serving in newly planted, mature or aging churches.

### ► MISSION FLOWS FROM THE HEART

No ministry will escape problems and challenges that will require critical thinking and deep spiritual resources. A goal in graduate education would be preparation for accepting greater challenges in

ministry. A well-equipped servant will intentionally take on difficult missions. Mark Finn (M.Th., 1986) has been in the same church in Pennsylvania since he graduated.

Campaigns Northeast created the burden in his heart that has defined his mission. Last week he told me, however, he could not imagine how he could have served effectively there without his training at the Graduate School of Religion. I hear this often from our alumni.

We all need a vivid memory of the very things we may want to forget — a void that only we can fill. It might be an image of being lost, suffering or death. A principle I repeat often is that “ministry will flow out of the thing that burdens us.” That burden comes from the memory with such a grip on our hearts we cannot escape it. It could be suffering children in Africa being rescued from the slave trade (as happened a few months ago in the Village of Hope in Ghana). It could be a struggling cluster of Christians in regions of the country where the church is very weak, or a church where they cannot locate a qualified preacher to minister with them. (Currently five churches in the Philadelphia area are looking for a preacher. Churches in California are closing at an alarming rate due in part to the fact they can't compete with churches in the South for trained ministers.)

It could be the memory of children who have never read the Bible enjoying a week of Vacation Bible School. It could be the teen who went with a friend to a youth



HUFFARD

activity at church and within a year became a Christian. Someone's heart needs to be etched with the memories of seniors, inner-city poor, migrant workers, young adults struggling through the liminal years without a connection to the church, or single mothers struggling to support and raise their children.

### ► MEMORY MOTIVATES THE HEART

Graduate education cannot be limited to the head, so I constantly appeal to church leaders to create two-year apprenticeships in their congregations to give graduate students an opportunity to blend graduate studies with mentoring in ministry.

We all know that there is a wide ditch on either side of this road. The analytical non-relational student can get so enamored by academic pursuits that relationships and service in the family, church or community are neglected. Or, what I see more often — students who get so involved in ministry that they fail to invest time in study (or even see the value of it) — sacrificing their personal growth, discipline and long-term effectiveness on the altar of the immediate. Faithfulness in ministry thrives on the integration of head and heart, knowledge and wisdom, facts and memory.

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

# Leon Sanderson, A Student of God's Word

**O**n May 5, the Graduate School of Religion will graduate its 49th class. One graduate will be receiving his third degree from the Graduate School. Leon Sanderson (M.R.E., 1963; M.Div., 1998; lsanderson@cocws.org) is slated to receive a doctorate in ministry.

Son of the renowned song writer L.O. Sanderson, whose most famous piece is "Be with Me, Lord," Leon is himself musical, serving as worship leader at the White Station congregation in Memphis for the past 28 years.

His roles include teaching, overseeing life groups and coordinating the involvement ministry. One additional role that ties in with his doctoral dissertation is leading the senior adult ministry.

His dissertation explores the role grandparents play in the social and moral development of grandchildren. "I wanted to establish the importance of senior adult ministry generally but focus on how grandparents can pass on values to their grandchildren," Sanderson says.

The research portion of the dissertation started with two groups of church members with elementary-aged grandchildren. He led each class through training materials developed as part of the dissertation process and let them implement what they had learned.

After two months he began evaluating the results based on feedback from the



SANDERSON AND ARICK

grandparents. They discovered the relationships were strengthened as a result of Sanderson's training material, but intentionality was the key. "Grandparents could not pass on these kinds of values by osmosis," he notes.

Sanderson is developing his lessons into a program other churches can implement. The topics include fitting grandparenting into the mission of the church, affirming the vital role of grandparents, differences between the world in which grandparents were reared and the world grandchildren live in today, the value of self-discipline, the value of compassion, and the value of faith.

Sanderson has been more than a student. He co-wrote the Graduate School's alma mater. (His father wrote the alma mater for Harding University.) In 1992 he founded the Sanderson Memorial Scholarship fund to honor his father; his mother, Rena

Raye; and his sister, Lloydene.

The Graduate School has played an important role in Sanderson's ministry, so the fund is an appropriate way to honor his family legacy and support future ministers at the same time. While his dissertation looked at strengthening the values of grandchildren, the Sanderson Memorial Scholarship will help train those who will minister to all of our grandchildren.

► *Larry Arick*  
(larick@hugsr.edu)

## Run for the Son April 14

**T**he annual Run for the Son 5K run and one-mile fun walk will be held April 14 on campus. Check-in opens at 7 a.m. for an 8 a.m. start. Registration is \$20 per participant and includes a T-shirt and goodie bag.

## Gladys West Dies

Gladys West, second wife of the late Dr. W.B. West Jr., died Dec. 20, 2006, in Birmingham, Ala. She was 93. The family has asked that memorials be sent to Harding University Graduate School of Religion.

## Hackney New University Director of Estate Planning

We are pleased to announce that Ted Hackney, J.D., has joined Harding University as director of the Center for Charitable Estate Planning. For information regarding your estate planning



needs, please contact Larry Arick, (901) 432-7727, larick@harding.edu or Ted Hackney, (800) 477-4312, ext. 3, thackney@harding.edu.

# Two Teams. Two Cities. Two

▶ 1983

**W**hen brothers Dale (M.Th., 1979) and Kent (M.Th., 1981) Hartman participated in a 1974 campaign to Australia, they had no idea the impact that trip would have.

Their short-term trip opened their eyes to the potential ministry in that country. “Few people in the States think of supporting missions in Australia because few workers have been there and their ‘results’ are usually not as spectacular as other countries,” Kent said.

What the Hartmans saw that summer, along with encouragement from Australian Christians, would eventually take both men, their families and new teammates Down Under. Kent and Nancy served from 1983 to 2000, while Dale and Sheila served from 1979 to 1990.

Their work focused on the Sydney suburb of Campbelltown and included teammates Charlie (M.Th., 1980) and Debbie Powell and Tony (M.A.R., 1987) and Betty Keesee.

Regarding the strength of their team, Dale said, “When we faced an issue, Charlie kept asking ‘What does the

church and nurtured it. A key part of their work was involvement in the community. Kent served as PTA president and even wrote a column for the local paper. Today the church in Campbelltown continues to reach out to their community and has a core of faithful young people, according to Dale.

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**“The last U.S.-based mission team to go to Australia was to Campbelltown, in 1983. That team was made up of mostly Harding Graduate School of Religion graduates. Now more than 20 years later, a new team is emerging on the campus of the Graduate School of Religion for the nation of Australia.”**

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▶ Alan Phillips, Missions Resource Network

The connections to Australia continue. Dale now ministers at the Eastside Church of Christ in Midwest City, Okla., the same congregation that sponsored his work in Australia. Kent currently serves as missionary in residence at Oklahoma Christian University, where he casts the vision of Australian

text say about that?’ Tony would call us to pray about it, and Kent would ask, ‘How can we tell the lost about that?’ How can you lose with such a biblical, prayer-bathed, evangelistic perspective?”

The team planted a

mission work in the minds of young men and women. Two of the men Kent influenced now attend the Graduate School of Religion and are training to lead teams back to Australia.

The Hartman brothers



Tony and Betty Keesee family, Charlie and Debbie Powell family, Dale and Sheila Hartman family, and Kent and Nancy Hartman family

# Centuries. One School.

did not grow up with an eye toward ministry. They grew up on a farm in Oklahoma growing cotton, wheat and cattle. Their local congregation made missions a priority, continually exposing their youth to guest missionaries. Dale remembered seeing a presentation on Africa and thinking, "Those people need the Gospel."

A youth minister who had grown up in South Africa came to their town one summer when the brothers were in high school. Kent remembered that this missionary talked with him about missions, his life growing up in South Africa, and God's desire for all to hear the Good News about his son, Jesus Christ. That seed would bear fruit, not only in Kent's life, but also in the lives of those whom he encourages in missions.

"There are opportunities to plant churches almost anywhere in Australia," Kent said. "There are also opportunities to work side by side with good Aussie brothers and sisters."

Dale and Kent view the Graduate School as a place where they developed patience and gained knowledge. "I knew I was going to Australia, so I wanted as much breadth in training as possible," Dale said.

"Our time in Memphis helped us develop our skills in ministry and reminded us that God's plan often takes years and even generations to come about."

Through their continued work supporting the next generation of missionaries, Dale and Kent continue to

use the broad skills and long-term vision they gained at the Graduate School of Religion.

## ► 2007

**A** career as a computer network engineer may not be typical preparation for mission work, but it is the path Shawn Griffith chose to follow.

First he explored ministry in his home church in Michigan while working in the business world. Later he moved to Memphis with his wife, Kendra, and their son and daughter to enroll in the Master of Divinity program. He is expecting to graduate in May. His family will move to Australia as soon as December to plant a church in the city of Wollongong.

"We intend to begin building relationships with people who are not practicing Christians and allow God to confront them through our own lives," Griffith said. He acknowledges the stigma often attached to Australian missions as an "unreceptive" field.

They will not be going alone. At the Graduate School they met Jason and Nicole Whaley, who were looking for a mission team to go with them to Australia. The two couples surveyed possible church planting sites in 2005 and committed to go to Wollongong that same year.

The Graduate School was a healthy place for the team to form. "The environment has given us the ability to ask serious questions, which is imperative as we go into the Australian environment," Griffith said.

"We were not equipped for long-term ministry before we came to the Graduate School of Religion," Whaley said. "Agnostics asked us questions for which we were not ready. The depths of people's sin problems were stressful, and we weren't able to face those kinds of challenges with composure and patient prayer."

Whaley credits his experiences at the Graduate School with teaching him discipline and deepening his faith. "We learned to believe in God a lot more than

we believe in our own knowledge and abilities," he said.

The team includes the Griffiths and the Whaleys but has grown to include Jon and Sara Grizzle and their children as well as Corey and Emily Mullins. They will begin arriving in Australia in late 2007. Griffith and Whaley expect to graduate with their Master of Divinity degrees in May. "God has equipped us for spreading the truth of the Gospel in a post-Christian environment," Whaley said.

Australia is heavily influenced by many cultures, and its geographic proximity to Asia makes it an ideal launching point for missions beyond Australia itself. "We believe we can communicate the Gospel in this multicultural environment with boldness and understanding," Whaley said.



### Contact the teams:

Dale and Sheila Hartman  
dale.hartman@gmail.com  
Kent and Nancy Hartman  
kent.hartman@oc.edu  
Jason and Nicole Whaley  
jaznic@gmail.com  
Shawn and Kendra Griffith  
shawn.t.griffith@gmail.com  
Jon and Sara Grizzle  
jongrizzle@gmail.com  
Corey and Emily Mullins  
coreyamullins@yahoo.com  
Tony and Betty Keese  
preachok@aol.com  
Charlie and Debbie Powell  
charles.powell@oc.edu

# BRIEFS

## Logan Joins Admissions Staff

Daphne Logan has joined the admissions staff as administrative assistant to the assistant vice president. In addition to working with admissions, she will supervise campus housing. She is a member of the White Station congregation in Memphis.



LOGAN

## Admissions

# Student Selected for Egypt Trip

**R**usty Woods has a place in the summer 2007 tour to Egypt and Israel directed by Drs. Evertt W. Huffard and Jack P. Lewis. A donor provided



funds for the trip. Full-time students applied for the award, and faculty chose eight finalists. On Dec. 18, Lewis randomly drew the winning entry.  
LEWIS and WOODS

## Preview Graduate School April 5 at Connections

**E**ach semester prospective students are invited to attend Connections, a campus preview day. This spring Connections will coincide with the annual Ministry Forum April 5. Prospective students can participate in the Ministry Forum, explore their opportunities at the Graduate School of Religion, and seek academic advising. Register for

Connections by e-mailing Daphne Logan at [dlogan@hugsr.edu](mailto:dlogan@hugsr.edu).

For more information, go to [www.hugsr.edu](http://www.hugsr.edu).

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Prospective students  
submitting applications  
for admissions  
during Connections  
will have their  
\$40 application waived.

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## “Stories of Transformation” DVD Available

**T**he transformational ministries of alumni and students show the impact of the Graduate School of Religion. A DVD released this spring chronicles the ministries of eight students, explores their ministries, and shows the role the Graduate School plays in their personal development as leaders.

Designed primarily for those considering studies at the Graduate School, the video highlights these students' ministries:

**RUSTY WOODS** (Master of Divinity), global missions

**RACHEL COX** (Master of Arts in Counseling), campus ministry and counseling

**SCOTT LAIRD** (Master of Arts in Christian Ministry), preaching in Great Falls, Mont.

**STEVEN HOVATER** and **SHANNON COOPER** (Master of Divinity), youth ministry

**HAMILTON ARCHIBALD** (Master of Divinity), preaching and teaching

**GWEN JACKSON** (Master of Divinity), academic training and ministry to the poor

**JON REED** (Doctor of Ministry), congregational leadership



The “Stories of Transformation” DVD features Jon Reed, Doctor of Ministry candidate, who ministers in El Segundo, Calif.

# Gray Releases Pre-Marital “12 Conversations” Program

Counseling professor Dr. Ed Gray (M.Th., 1978), in conjunction with the Harding University Institute for Church & Family, has produced *Mentoring for Dating Couples: 12 Conversations for Building Strong Marriages*. This mentoring program, co-authored by Susan Giboney of Pepperdine University, builds on Gray’s grassroots Marriage Mentoring program



but focuses on those preparing for marriage. The Marriage Mentoring program has received nation-

al attention from military, secular and religious leaders for its comfortable approach to developing mentors between younger and older couples. The Sacramento, Calif., Community Marriage Initiative will begin implementing the Marriage Mentoring program in May. For information about beginning a Marriage Mentoring program in your community, contact Gray at [egray@hugsr.edu](mailto:egray@hugsr.edu).

# Powell Tapped as Ministry Board’s Chair

Dr. Mark Powell, associate professor of theology, has been named board chair for HopeWorks, a Memphis ministry serving the chronically unemployed.

“We talk about helping the poor, and HopeWorks helps people in our churches have authentic relationships with those who are unable to find or keep employment,” Powell says.

More than just giving handouts, the ministry provides a 13-week program of life skill strengthening and spiritual development. The

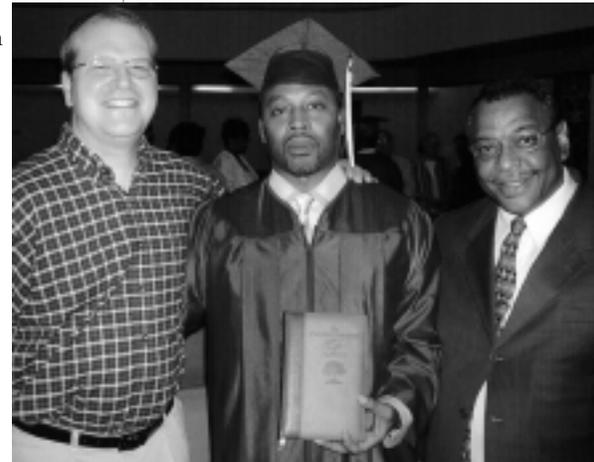
program culminates with an internship, placing participants in jobs. The 50th class began in January.

A natural connection exists between Powell and this kind of ministry. He understands urban ministry, having worked in an Atlanta inner-city ministry for six years.

Even more, his role as theologian enlivens the ministry, and vice-versa. “Walking among the poor means helping them see the skills, resources and gifts they already possess,” he says. “We help them see where God has been working in their lives.

“I teach ethics. HopeWorks is a tangible way for us to help the vulnerable in our society, which is what ethics call us to do.”

Linking his theology and practice makes sense given the metropolitan nature of Memphis. “At Harding Graduate School, we learn in an urban context,” Powell notes. “Several students and graduates work as faith encouragers or counselors, which lets me share this experience with my students.”



Powell with HopeWorks graduate Tracey Maxwell and Dr. Harold Redd, Mid-Town Church of Christ minister

# Bland Publishes, Edits and Assumes Editorial Duties

Dr. Dave Bland, professor of homiletics, contributed a series of six essays on the Psalms to the new *Lectionary Commentary Series* published by John Knox Press. He also contributed an essay to *The New Interpreter’s Handbook of*

*Preaching* published by Abingdon Press.

Bland, along with David Fleer, is editing a new book published by Chalice Press, *Preaching the Sermon on the Mount: The World it Imagines*, to be released in May.

Beginning with the spring issue, Bland will serve as new

editor of the preaching section of *Homiletic*, an academic journal sponsored by the Academy of Homiletics and the Religious Communication Association.

Bland ([dbland@hugsr.edu](mailto:dbland@hugsr.edu)) teaches preaching courses and directs the Doctor of Ministry program.

# Thomason Dies

Billie Thomason, long-time assistant to the librarian, died



THOMASON

Dec. 22, 2006, after a battle with cancer. From 1971 until 1997, Billie greeted students in the library with her smile. As overseer of circulation, she was also known as the person who sent overdue notices firmly but graciously.

The family has requested that memorials be sent to the Kenneth and Billie Thomason Endowed Scholarship Fund at Harding University Graduate School of Religion. Her daughter established the fund in 1989 to support the training of preachers and missionaries.

# Three-stage Transformation

**F**ew people have been called to give more in the line of ministry than Ezekiel. He is required to lie on his side beneath a tablet of clay for 390 days. Thirteen months later he is allowed to get up, only to have to lie on his other side for 40 more days. His pain in these events symbolized the pain of Israel's sin (4:5).

To symbolize the loss of food in Jerusalem, Ezekiel is called by God to eat unclean bread. God relents from such a demand, but the bread Ezekiel eats is fouled (4:9-15).

Eventually Ezekiel's wife dies, but he is not allowed to mourn (24:23-24). His inner turmoil acted as a sign to the people of their impending turmoil at the loss of the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Why would Ezekiel go along with such bizarre demands from God? More immedi-

ate to us today, why would anyone sacrifice his or her comfort for the sake of ministry?

The answer to both questions is the same.

In the first three chapters of Ezekiel, the prophet encounters God. First, he catches a glimpse of God's majesty in the form of a radiant man. Unable to look on God directly, he sees only the "appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (1:28 NIV). Humbled by even this muted vision, Ezekiel falls on his face to worship.

The Lord then gives Ezekiel a scroll containing laments — the words of prophecy he was to speak to the people. Surprisingly, the Lord tells him to eat the scroll, which tastes as sweet as honey.

Finally God gives Ezekiel a charge (3:4ff). "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them." Whether or not they listen, God calls to

Ezekiel to prophesy to God's people.

Why would Ezekiel endure such incredible pain in his ministry? Because he has seen God, consumed God's words and been charged to service.

Those who choose to serve in ministry may never have to endure what the prophet did, but the task of ministry should grow out of a relationship similar to Ezekiel's relationship with the Lord.

As leaders come to the Graduate School of Religion, we pray they discover God's glory, are fed deeply with God's words, and feel called to a vital ministry of sharing God's words with the world.

Seeing God. Absorbing God's word. Answering God's call. These are the things of which transformation is made.

▶ Mark Parker ([mparker@hugsr.edu](mailto:mparker@hugsr.edu))

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GRADUATE SCHOOL of RELIGION  
1000 Cherry Road  
Memphis, TN 38117

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