



the Bridge

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Celebrating 50 Years of Graduating Leaders

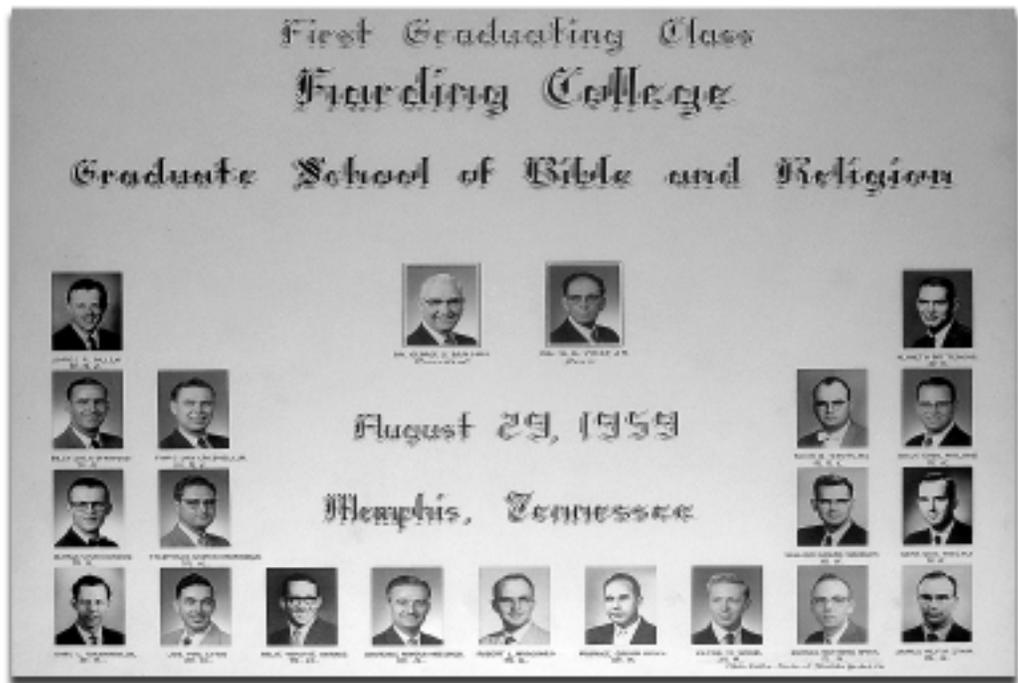
The 2008 commencement exercises May 3 will form Harding University Graduate School of Religion's "Golden Graduation." The first class graduated from the Memphis campus in 1959.

The class of 2008 will join

the ranks of 1,446 graduates serving as ministry leaders across the globe. Approximately 25 students are expected to graduate.

Graduate work at Harding University began on the Searcy, Ark., campus in 1952. Extension courses in Memphis were first offered in

1955, meeting in the Union Avenue Church of Christ building (now the Midtown Church of Christ building). In 1958, Harding's board of trustees expanded the Memphis program to a branch campus, and the Graduate School of Religion was born.



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Dean's Note

Our Inheritance

The kingdom of God knows no generational boundaries, but we struggle to be multigenerational. You have heard the quip about spending the next generation's inheritance. This is matched by the legal mess the next generation faces when parents die without a will. Is it our busyness, self-centeredness or unwillingness to face death that traps us in our time zone? Finances aside, I am more concerned about a rich spiritual inheritance of core beliefs and values.

Erik Erikson names the concern of one generation in guiding the next "generativity." For George Vaillant it is a concern to give something back or assume responsibility for other adults. This natural tendency at middle age could be called the "Titus 2:1-8 thing." However, very few church leaders invest time in mentoring the next generation of leaders. A growing number of younger Christians have little appreciation for their rich spiritual heritage. How can the inheritance be received if the gap between generations grows larger? Must every generation succumb to creating its own kingdom and yield to the temptations of its own fears?

Our idolatrous society creates its own gods. (Some of them are "security," "the American dream," "freedom," "self-reliance" and "never satisfied.") The rapid decline of mainline churches with the corresponding increase of

independent community churches appears to create new opportunities for Christian unity — on the surface. The plea to just follow Jesus, although very valid, often seeks a Jesus who is more American than divine. American religion is big on grace but weak on truth, making it easy to reject the church (of another generation?) as not "our people."

God revealed his glory through Jesus, full of both grace and truth. Our heritage has been weak on grace, but that should not call for a golden idol named "grace"! It should call for repentance for imposing legalistic attitudes on another generation. One

Must every generation succumb to creating its own kingdom and yield to the temptations of its own fears?

generation heard more about salvation by works, so as they discovered grace in the Word, they decided the church was not their people. The youth of this generation often get more grace than doctrine, so what happens when they discover that the values of the kingdom Jesus proclaimed may not fit the image of an American Jesus?

If the meek inherit the earth, how will they inherit it? Could Jesus also be saying that meekness might be a prerequisite of any spiritual inheritance? If we were to ask God to take us as his inheritance, as Moses did at Sinai, what would God get? What



HUFFARD

will the next generation inherit from us? These are pressing issues of the kingdom.

Paul made it clear that those who are not led by the Spirit, as identified by behaviors like quarrels, dissensions and factions, will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21-26). However, those who have the Spirit have the ability to be faithful or loyal. They can appreciate receiving and passing on an inheritance.

The truth that the perishable could not inherit the kingdom of God led to the exhortation to be "steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the

Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The loss of a generation could render a lot of "ministry" in vain. Three generations of alumni spanning 50 years at the Graduate School of Religion (1,446 graduates, and another 2,600 who have taken classes) are serving all over the world. I am convinced that the efforts of Drs. George Benson, W. B. West and Jack Lewis were not in vain! The Graduate School of Religion serves a vital link in the inheritance of the kingdom.

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

New Students Continue Tradition of Ministry Excellence

Jordan Guy

Hometown: Florence, Ala.
Undergraduate School:
Freed-Hardeman
Major: Bible

Jordan, along with his wife, Taylor, serves the Bells Church



of Christ in Bells, Tenn. Jordan preaches and studies at the Graduate School of Religion. His academic goal is to teach Old Testament at a Christian university. Jordan is in the master of divinity program.

BRIDGE: What was your first semester experience at the Graduate School of Religion like?

GUY: Each week, I leave class and chapel feeling nourished and challenged by my professors and friends. One of the greatest experiences has been meeting so many fellow Christians who share my passion for ministry.

BRIDGE: Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

GUY: I wanted a theological education. My father and older brother attended and bragged to me about their experiences. After visiting the campus on several occasions, I saw what they were talking about. There is something at Harding that you can't find just anywhere. Also, the teacher-to-student ratio really impressed me, because I am one who enjoys learning from my professors inside and outside of class.

BRIDGE: Have you been challenged in some specific way so far?

GUY: I have already read more

material in one semester than I probably read in my entire college experience. Adjusting has been challenging but very rewarding. Every time I get discouraged by the numerous assignments lurking in the future, I find some comfort in just glancing down on the floor beside my computer chair at the books and articles that I have already read. When I stop to realize what I have already accomplished, I find the strength to continue on to bigger and better things.

BRIDGE: What role does your scholarship play in coming here?

GUY: Without any financial aid, I would be unable to afford a master's degree. Harding's generous scholarship quickly narrowed down my graduate school choices. I did not have the funds to send my wife and myself through school. Harding saw that and chose to help us. We will always be grateful for the sacrifices others had to make for us to grow spiritually.

BRIDGE: Anything you'd like to say to a prospective student?

GUY: A theological education is worth every minute you spend in study, every dollar you spend on textbooks, every night you spend in the library, every ink cartridge you use up on term papers, every gallon of gas you pump to get to and from campus, and every hobby you have to go without to focus every spare minute on sharpening your theological tools for the Lord, his church and his kingdom.

BRIDGE: Anything you'd like to say to those who help fund the school?

GUY: If I had to pay every dollar that it costs to educate a sin-

gle student at Harding, I would not be able to start my education for another five to 10 years. You have given me time and money. Who knows how many souls I will be able to reach in these five to 10 years that I might not have been able to reach had I not been given the chance to learn.

Cynthia Turner

Hometown: St. Louis
Undergraduate School:
St. Louis Christian College
Major: Bible

Cynthia lives on campus and has quickly shown herself as an



example of focus and discipline. She is committed to a ministry of prayer and fellowship and volunteers for the Memphis crisis hotline. She is in the master of arts in counseling program.

BRIDGE: What was your first semester experience at the Graduate School of Religion like?

TURNER: Everything and anything that encompass the word "new" describes my experience here. You name it, it's new, and it's wonderful. It's also rewarding, because I feel like it's a promise being fulfilled here on earth. God promised that all things will be made new, and being here has allowed me to appreciate and understand just what that means.

BRIDGE: Why did you come to the Graduate School of Religion?

TURNER: My spiritual convictions are the main reasons I am here, and I wanted to be in a learning environment that

would support, train, nurture and encourage my convictions.

BRIDGE: Have you been challenged in some specific way so far?

TURNER: The greatest challenge has been discipline. I often tell my friends back home that being here is like a ballplayer being called from the minor league to the major league. Meaning that it's still baseball, but there is a different level of discipline and expectation that is needed and required. The attitude of finesse and procrastination that I mastered has no place in grad school.

BRIDGE: What role does your scholarship play in coming here?

TURNER: My scholarship played a very important role in two aspects. The obvious is financially. It would have been very difficult to fund my schooling without such great help. The scholarship also gives me a sense of responsibility to others. The expression of kindness showed me that there are those who believe in the works here and the potential students. That combination of thoughts has humbled me greatly, giving me a desire to succeed.

BRIDGE: Anything you'd like to say to a prospective student?

TURNER: The Graduate School of Religion is much more than an institution of learning. It is a place of living, loving and learning.

BRIDGE: Anything you'd like to say to those who help fund the school?

TURNER: Your kindness and generosity are admirable and greatly appreciated. Thank you for your blessings!

Lewis honored at SBL

Dr. Jack Lewis, professor emeritus, was honored at November's annual meeting of the Restoration Theological Research Fellowship, a group that meets in connection with the annual American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature meetings.

The recognition included a plaque, reading: "To Dr. Jack P. Lewis. With gratitude, respect and honor for more than half a century of pioneering leadership in scholarship in service of the church. From your students, colleagues, and friends in the Restoration Theological Research Fellowship. November 17, 2007."

Faculty

Oster Takes Field Trip to Pompeii Exhibit

Dr. Richard Oster (roster@hugsr.edu) took students in his "New Testament World" course to the Pompeii exhibit in Birmingham, Ala., Oct. 23. Because of the Mt. Vesuvius eruption in A.D. 79, the remains of Pompeii have preserved a snapshot of what a New Testament-era town looked like, Oster reports. "New Testament World" studies the historical, archeological and cultural backgrounds that underlie the New Testament.



Dr. Richard Oster with students Darin Little and Bob Turner (in back) and Rachel Steele, Rusty Woods and Shannon Cooper (in front).

Greek Course Popularity Rises

Greek courses have long been a staple of ministry and theological studies at the Graduate School of Religion, whether in online or on-campus formats. Due to the increased need for online Greek in recent

years, the two semesters of "Elementary Greek" will now be offered online every other year, instead of every third year, reports Dr. Allen Black (ablack@hugsr.edu), professor of New Testament. On-campus Greek courses will still be offered every year.

Archaeologist Illuminates Beth-Shemesh

On Oct. 23, Dr. Phil McMillion, professor of Old Testament, hosted Dr. Zvi Lederman for a lecture on "Archaeology at Beth-Shemesh." Lederman is a professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv University in Israel. The biblical city of Beth-Shemesh stood on the border between Philistia and Judah, so it provides important information about the relationships between the two powers.

McMillion, who has dug at Tel Beth-



Dr. Phil McMillion on site at Tel Beth-Shemesh with Drs. Zvi Lederman and Shlomo Bunimovitz. Shemesh, teaches "Biblical Archaeology" and textual courses.

Faculty Speaking Engagements

Dr. Allen Black spoke in October in Gemünden, Germany, at a seminar sponsored by the Ministry for Theological Education.

Dr. Phil McMillion (pmmillion@hugsr.edu), professor of Old Testament, delivered three classes on the Psalms during the 2007 Harding University Lectureship in Searcy, Ark.

Dr. Evertt W. Huffard (dean@hugsr.edu) spoke in several venues during the last quarter: Central Church of Christ in Little Rock, Ark.; Northwest Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas; World Missions Workshop at Oklahoma Christian University; Harding University Lectureship; and Harpeth Hills Church of Christ in Nashville, Tenn.

From September through November, Dr. Ed Gray (egray@hugsr.edu), professor of counseling, and two counseling students, Angela Rusk and Sean Gearson, conducted

weekly discussion groups for senior citizens at Town Village Retirement Community adjacent to the Graduate School campus. They are beta testing Gray's new ministry program for seniors, *Life after 60*, *Senior-to-Senior Mentoring: 12 Conversations for Active Living*.

Gray also presented *Senior Mentoring and Marriage Mentoring: 12 Conversations* programs at the Abundant Living seminar in Branson, Mo., in October.

Investing in Generations

Because of the special nature of endowment funds, an organization should undertake building an endowment only when:

- ▶ The organization is old enough to have exhibited sufficient financial stability for donors to feel comfortable giving to endowment, which will yield income in perpetuity.
- ▶ The organization can reasonably expect healthy annual fund giving and grant income.
- ▶ The organization has the desire, resources and opportunity to manage a successful endowment campaign for a substantial amount of money.

The Graduate School of Religion has relied on supplemental funds from Harding University for the past 50 years. During those first decades, it was not practical to think about an endowment, since all the money

raised from tuition and gifts needed to be used to cover expenses. It is not surprising that after the school had been in existence for more than 40 years, the endowment was only \$700,000. The first two criteria had to be met.

The Lord has blessed us with an increase in our endowment over the last 10 years to \$7.5 million. We have also reduced the amount of supplement from Harding University to a manageable amount. We want to increase our endowment to \$12 million over the next five years to take the school to the next level.

With endowment funds, a portion of the interest is used in the manner designated by donors. The rest of the interest is reinvested to keep ahead of inflation. The principal and reinvested interest continue to provide a steady source of income in perpetuity.

Endowments are win-win opportunities. People who set up the endowment win by

knowing their work for the Lord will continue after they are gone. The Graduate School of Religion wins by having these funds to use each year in the form of scholarships for deserving students training for ministry and leadership.

Endowments require \$10,000 to be fully funded. That amount can be provided as a one-time gift or extended over a five-year period. Other gifts may be added at any time. Many choose to include the Graduate School of Religion in their wills, establishing the fund out of the proceeds of their estates. Remember, endowments will provide scholarship funds for students until Jesus returns.

If you would like more information regarding setting up an endowed scholarship fund, please call me at (901) 432-7727. I would be happy to meet and discuss a plan for you.

▶ *Larry Arick (larick@hugsr.edu)*

Advancement Council Luncheon

The annual Advancement Council Luncheon will be Tuesday, April 1, at 11:45 a.m. on the Graduate School of Religion campus. The luncheon honors those who support the school at the level of \$600 or more per year and brings in a speaker of note. For more information, call the Advancement Office at (901) 761-1355.

Leadership Council Honors Yeldell Legacy

The annual Leadership Council Dinner on Sept. 29 honored the legacy of Nokomis and Dollie Yeldell. The Yeldell name in Memphis is nearly synonymous with perseverance in ministry. Yeldell served churches for 57 years, including 49 years at the Norris Road congregation in Memphis, before his untimely death June 16.



Dollie and Nokomis Yeldell



The Yeldell's daughter, Jean Winston, addresses the crowd honoring her parents.

BRIEFS

Scholarship Deadline Set

New and returning students must submit their applications for scholarship for the 2008-09 school year to the Admissions Office by March 1.

Applications for scholarship may be downloaded from the admissions link at www.hugsr.edu.

New students should have an application for admission on file with completed references and official transcripts by March 1.

Connections Preview Day April 3

Coinciding with the annual Ministry Forum, prospective students are invited to Connections, the spring campus preview day. Beginning at 3 p.m. April 3, the day includes a student reception, campus tours, dinner with the faculty, and the Ministry Forum program.

As a bonus for Connections guests, those who apply for admission that day will have their \$40 application fee waived.

For more information, contact the Admissions Office at hgsadmissions@hugsr.edu or (800) 680-0809.

Admissions

Challenging and empowering students remains goal

We talk a lot about leadership transformation at Harding

University Graduate School of Religion. We place academic demands on students that both challenge them and empower them to better serve using their God-given gifts.

One example of challenging students while empowering them can be found in the course "Spiritual Leadership" taught by Dr. Evertt W.

Huffard. In particular, the major projects of the course are two leadership emergence pattern papers. One paper examines a past or present leader. In the other paper, students examine themselves,

looking at their pasts and trying to understand how God is using them.

Using nomenclature developed by J. Robert Clinton, the students examine the stages of life a person goes through. By using terms like "process item"—something that God uses to help refine people—students identify how the person's life was shaped. More importantly, the students can see how God grew the leader through people, places and events that the person may not have understood at the time.

The students apply the same process in the second paper, focusing on their own lives. What events in my past have shaped who I am today?

What do those things and my response to them suggest about my spiritual growth?

By collecting data about their own lives, students can then use the interpretive skills they developed in the first project to understand better what God has been doing with and through them.

The process is tough, both because it involves quite a bit of reading and because it requires students to be honest with themselves. But the process is important in helping students recognize the spiritual resources they have already been given. And it helps them catch a vision for where God may be leading them toward the future.



Dr. Evertt Huffard (right) speaks with students about their spiritual transformations at Harding Graduate School of Religion.

From the Archive

Annie May Alston Lewis, founding librarian, assists a student in the library originally located in the basement of the mansion. ▶



Founding dean Dr. W.B. West Jr. and Velma West, Greek instructor. ▼



The first deans pose for this historic photo: Drs. W.B. West Jr., Harold Hazelip, C. Philip Slate, Ed Myers and Bill Flatt. ▼



Ministry Forum Slated for April

The annual Ministry Forum will be held April 3 in the W.B. West Jr. Center on the Harding Graduate School of Religion campus. The forum brings thinkers and practitioners of ministry to campus for meaningful dialogue. For more information, visit www.hugsr.edu.



▲ Max Patterson, Clyde Thatcher, George Snure, Alvin Stephens, Jerry Jones and Bill Flatt enjoy a campus picnic in 1962.

Don Meredith (M.Th., 1967), current librarian, as a student. ▶



Linda Oxford (M.A.R., 1981), adjunct professor of counseling, shakes hands with Dean Hazelip at her graduation. ▶



Before Graduate Training Became Cool

Barbara Mandrell proudly sings that she “was country when country wasn’t cool.” Acknowledging the risk of sounding trite, as I reflect on Harding University Graduate School of Religion, I think I can understand her sentiment.

I was not even born when Harding University Graduate School of Religion opened its doors in Memphis, and I never met Dr. W.B. West Jr. As I look back at our list of alumni, I have sat with many of them — more often at their feet than at the table. The simple fact is that in my education and my job I have inherited a great legacy that I did not create.

During the early days of the Graduate School of Religion, there was not a tremendous amount of support for graduate education in ministry. Since there was no immediate reward for earning a degree — few churches systematically gave raises to ministers completing advanced training — the motivation for learning most often had to come from within the student.

Even without external motivators, students still came. They came because of the quality, seeing something in the faculty, students and resources here that equipped them to serve in their ministries better.

Today, graduate training for ministry is commonplace. Elders and congregations

realize the difference in maturity and spiritual depth that comes from quality graduate education.

I cannot help but think that the shift from disdaining graduate training to embracing it has come in part from our 50 years of producing excellent leaders. As we prepare to graduate the 50th class in 2008, I am humbled to have inherited a legacy of excellence in graduate training for ministry.

Have no fear. Barbara Mandrell and I have no plans for a music tour. But I am grateful to be part of a legacy that started long before graduate training became cool.

▶ Mark Parker
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