

# The *Bridge*

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## The Bridge

*The Bridge* is published by Harding School of Theology for alumni, students, prospective students, contributors, and friends.

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Alicia Williamson (MA, MACM)  
speaks at *Harding Leadership*, Fall 2021

Photo Credit: Jeff Montgomery

## Reflections FROM THE Dean



Dr. Mark Powell

Photo Credit: Matt Carter

## Why HST? Five Reasons

By Dr. Mark E. Powell

Since 1958, Harding School of Theology has trained over 1,700 graduates who currently serve in 47 states and 20 foreign countries. In May we sent out 27 graduates who are engaged in preaching ministry, youth ministry, campus ministry, chaplaincy, foreign mission work, counseling, and doctoral studies. Why do students come to HST, and why do donors give sacrificially to this ministry? There are many reasons, but here are five.

### 1. Memphis is a great place to train ministers.

Memphis is a diverse city with many churches, Christian ministries, and other non-profit organizations that partner with HST and our students. On-campus students minister at urban, suburban, and rural churches, as well as churches where English is not the first language. They work or volunteer for campus ministries at local universities, urban ministries, faith-based medical centers that treat the underserved, and Christian schools. This is just a sample of the many ways students in Memphis can prepare for a lifetime of ministry while pursuing their theological education.

### 2. HST offers high-quality distance education.

Some students need to stay in their current ministry context or are second-career students. These distance students have access to our classes, and are part of a vibrant spiritual community, through a combination of LIVE (Live Interactive Video Education) classes that utilize Zoom and intensive courses that meet on-campus. HST has always been an innovator in distance education and will continue to explore ways to best train the most leaders possible.

### 3. HST is a global community of Christian leaders.

Community is vital for a lifetime of ministry, and HST students join a global network of Christian leaders. Our graduate-student-only campus allows for close relationships between professors and students. Our innovative distance program allows on-campus students and distance students to interact with our regular professors and each other in real time. HST has a national and international student body, and our partnership with Global Christian Studies allows us to train an increasingly global group of leaders. GCS students currently live in Australia, Bolivia, Ghana, Nigeria, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

### 4. HST provides strong academic programs and resources.

To be a spiritual leader in a complex world, students need access to quality mentors and the best resources. HST students are trained to be transformative ministers and thought leaders. Graduates who pursue doctoral degrees are accepted at leading research universities in the U.S. and throughout the world. Students and alumni have access to our L. M. Graves Memorial Library, the premier theological library in the Mid-South that allows the HST community to contribute to the highest levels of ministry and scholarship.

### 5. HST faculty and staff are committed to faithful discipleship.

At HST, students grow in their faith because they join a community that is focused on intentional discipleship. With the Spirit's help, HST faculty and staff are committed to seeking and following God through worship and the careful study of Scripture, to pursuing truth in the context of the historic Christian faith, and to proclaiming and living out the gospel in diverse ministry contexts.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you get a sense of the many ways that God is working in and through HST. We need three things from our supporters. One, pray for us. HST currently faces both unprecedented opportunities and unprecedented challenges, but we believe God is equipping us to participate in God's mission on a global scale for another 64 years and longer. Two, send students our way. If you know someone who is gifted in ministry, and who wants to grow in knowledge and discipleship, we want to further equip them for ministry. Three, support HST financially. When you support HST—either through scholarships, the Foundation Fund, or the annual fund—you are training global leaders and helping them graduate without debt so they can give their full attention to ministry. Simply put, we thank God for our many generous supporters. We cannot do this vital ministry without your partnership.

*Dr. Mark E. Powell, who has taught at HST for 20 years, became the seventh dean of HST in July. As professor of theology, he also teaches courses in Christian theology, ethics, and philosophy of religion. He has served in preaching, adult education, and urban ministry, and is currently a shepherd at the Sycamore View Church of Christ. Mark and his wife, Debbie, have one daughter and two sons.*

Photo Credit: R. Hemphill



Greg Muse

## A Face in the Crowd

By Greg Muse, HST Advancement Director

Have you seen HST's new website feature with graduation photos dating all the way back to 1959? Commencement programs are being added, too, and everyone who participated in the ceremonies is listed and searchable. Please go to <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/hst-graduates/> and search the name of any HST graduate. The entry will produce a group photo and legend identifying each class member for a particular year. Assuming the person you seek attended the graduation ceremony, you will see their smiling face beaming back at you.

HST staff gathered some interesting data while building the website. Harding President Cliff Ganus gave more commencement addresses (three) than any individual so far. Senior representatives from eight higher learning institutions have graced our commencement stage. Leon Sanderson is by far the most frequent

graduation program participant, with 28 appearances and counting.

Mortarboards and graduation gowns erase individuality. The regalia makes photos from the 1960s indistinguishable from photos in the 2010s. What is unique in every photo since 1959 is the look of accomplishment and expectation. Each graduate has achieved a dream that has been years in the making. They and their families have sacrificed a great deal for the diploma that has just been awarded. It's a happy day.

Donors are part of the picture, too. Though invisible, you are standing with the graduates, smiling at the camera. Your financial support makes graduation day possible. Thank you for helping us prepare another generation of ministers, teachers, and church leaders.

The work goes on. Please continue to support HST students with credit card gifts through our website at [HST.edu/giving](https://hst.edu/giving). Checks can be mailed to: HST Advancement, 1000 Cherry Road, Memphis, TN 38117. We would be grateful if you remembered HST in your estate plan.

Kudos to Systems Librarian Brenda Breezeel in Searcy, HST Associate Librarian Sheila Owen, and former Advancement assistant Kelly Ward for outstanding work in bringing this complex project to life. Special thanks to Drs. Evertt and Ileene Huffard, whose original idea and financial support were essential for the site.



L to R: Jessica Holland, Dr. Mark Powell, Dr. Steve Cloer

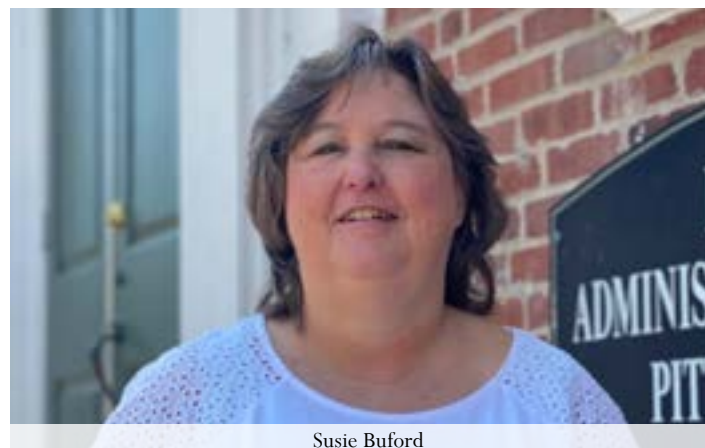
## HST Welcomes New Faculty and Staff

**Three new faculty and staff members joined HST in the summer and fall semesters.**

**Jessica Holland** is library director of the L.M. Graves Memorial Library and teaches the Advanced Theological Research course. She earned her bachelor's degree in English at Abilene Christian University and the Master of Science in Information Studies degree at the University of Texas in Austin. She and her husband, Cameron, attend the Holmes Road Church of Christ, where Cameron serves as minister. Before coming to HST, Jessica was the librarian at Harding Academy of Memphis for eleven years.

**Dr. Steve Cloer** is assistant professor of ministry and director of the Doctor of Ministry program. He earned the Master of Divinity degree at HST and the Doctor of Ministry degree at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2019 Steve was honored as the Harding University Young Alumnus of the Year. Steve and his wife, Lindsay, have a son and two daughters. They come from Fort Worth, Texas, where for 15 years Steve preached at the Southside Church of Christ, a racially, ethnically, and economically diverse church near downtown Fort Worth. Steve's academic and ministry interests are in leadership and mission.

**Susie Buford** is administrative assistant for Advancement and Admissions. She earned her bachelor's degree from Harding University in Elementary Education and her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Arkansas State University. Before coming to HST, Susie taught middle-school mathematics for 32 years and was a teacher leader the last ten years. She and her husband, Mike, have three adult sons and attend the Highland Church of Christ, where they serve as youth group volunteers.



Susie Buford



Lance Hawley

## Hope for the Future

HST's annual theme for 2021-2022 is "Hope for the Future."

Dr. Lance Hawley, Assistant Professor of Old Testament, wrote the theme article.

By Lance Hawley

I remember where and when I first heard the news that the vaccine for COVID-19 had been approved. I was driving and the radio broadcaster announced it in a somewhat nonchalant manner. Over the past year, I had grown skeptical of any return to the past, but in that moment, I experienced an overwhelming feeling of hope like I rarely had before. When we have grown used to our suffering, a kind of hopelessness tends to saturate life. Perhaps hope is most obviously experienced when good news breaks into pervasive despair. The light shines brightest in the darkest of places.

Hope is a major theme of the prophets, especially in contexts that seem utterly hopeless. For example, in Ezekiel 37, the people of God are envisioned as dry skeletons in an open valley, an image that reflects the lifelessness of Babylonian exile. The people say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost" (Ezek. 37:11). But in the vision of the prophet, God's word and breath resurrects dead bones and they become a living army. There is hope for their future as God says, "I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel" (Ezek. 37:12). The Gospel of Matthew perhaps reflects this very verse when dead bodies are raised at the moment of the death of Jesus (Matt. 28:52-53).

The prophetic message of Isaiah 40-55 also proclaims a kind of unimaginable hope for life after the exile. It seems as though the people of Israel had grown accustomed to life in Babylon and may have resisted moving back to their homeland, so the prophet announces the glories set out for them back in Zion. In Isa. 44:2-5, the LORD speaks of an abundant future:

*I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,  
and my blessing on your offspring.  
They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,  
like willows by flowing streams.  
This one will say, "I belong to the LORD,"  
another will be called by the name of Jacob,  
yet another will write on the hand, "Belonging to the LORD,"  
and adopt the name of Israel.*

In a time of sustained despair, the prophet imagines the people's future as an act of new creation. They are a seedling that will grow into a strong tree by the power of God's spirit, and they will all proclaim their commitment to the LORD.

Jeremiah is known for his suffering and oracles of judgment, but his prophetic career was also marked by a kind of irrational hope. For example, in the very year when the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem and the city's destruction was imminent, Jeremiah buys a piece of land. According to Jer. 32:15, he does so because the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel says, "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land." Jeremiah's hope for the future is more than just an eventual return to the land, but also a renewal of the people's covenant with God. God says that he will put his law within them, so that "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). In chapter 29, Jeremiah prophesies that the people of Judah will dwell in Babylon for seventy years, but after that time of exile, the LORD will visit his people. This is the context for the oft-quoted verse of hope, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans of peace (shalom) and not for harm, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). Right on the heels of hearing about a long period of despair, God assures them that a hopeful future remains. It is a future of peace, a future of abundance, and a future of being at home with God. The people will one day commune with God in the fullest sense.

As I write this, the world is seeing signs of recovery from its health crisis. Some of our old patterns of life are being experienced anew, but we are still waiting for and expecting a better future. This past year has taught us to live with uncertainty. And in many ways, uncertainty will surely remain. Even when the world heals from the pandemic, we will no doubt experience loneliness, sickness, injustice, systemic poverty, and brokenness of all kinds. However, in the midst of our exile, we hope in the divine promise that God would reign on earth as he does in heaven. This is a hope predicated upon the faithfulness of God, demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have good reason to believe that God will make all things right.

At Harding School of Theology, we plan on dwelling in hope this year. HST is in a period of transition with beloved faculty retiring and new faculty taking up the mission. We are genuinely excited to see where God leads us next. The pandemic has exacerbated the uncertainty that many are experiencing within local churches, but we have hope for renewal, that the people of God would renew their commitment to the LORD and live in tune with the Spirit. Our intention is not to be Pollyannaish (simply "sing and be happy"), but to recognize that even in the midst of trouble, by the grace of God we participate in and hope for the abundant reign of God. May the LORD fulfill his plan of peace and lead his people into a future and a hope.

# The Wilson Collection

By Jessica Holland

*There is power in story.* Stories capture our imagination more vividly than is possible with a simple stating of facts. A good story draws the audience in, making them a part of the unfolding. That act of invitation has a lasting effect. Earlier this semester, the HST community witnessed a powerful example of this truth.

## John F. Wilson Collection

*a collection of rare books on travel and exploration in the Middle East*

On Monday, September 20, we were visited by our friend and alumnus, Dr. John Wilson, Professor Emeritus of Religion and Dean Emeritus at Pepperdine University. The purpose of this visit was to bring us a wonderful gift – the first installment of the John F. Wilson Collection – a collection of rare books on travel and exploration in the Middle East. In addition to being a dean and a professor, Dr. Wilson is also an archaeologist and a traveler. As such, he has spent the past several decades carefully collecting and curating this specialized group of rare books.

Dr. Wilson delivered these books personally, and we were privileged to host a reception of faculty, staff, and close friends in his honor. At the reception Dr. Evertt W. Huffard, Professor Emeritus of Missions and Leadership Emeritus of HST and longtime friend of Dr. Wilson, facilitated an interview that gave us a beautiful window into both the life of Dr. Wilson and into the nature and story of this special collection.



Photo Credit: Mark Porter

He spoke of the stories that reside within each individual book – of men and women who studied and explored and of the cultures who experienced what it was like to have strangers enter their land. He spoke of events full of history and full of faith, full of art and full of creation. He explained the layer of story that is added through the physicality of each book – the value in knowing who owned each book and where they lived. Some books may have been lovingly cared for by the same family in the same location for generations, while other books may have travelled the world. There are narratives of those who created the books, who bound the pages, who painted the pictures, and who carved the engravings.

The final layer of story that Dr. Wilson spoke of is the one that he added himself. That is the story created by placing these specific books in this unique collection. Viewed side by side, these volumes now form a picture and a timeline that is likely unmatched in any other collection.

As our patrons and students come and go through this library and our school adding to the chapters of their lives, this gift will serve and enrich for generations to come. Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for sharing your story with us.

HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

# 2021 Graduates



Photo Credit: Holland Studio

### Master of Arts

Sean Patrick Cavender  
Aaron Christopher Parker

### Master of Arts in Christian Ministry

Edward V. Carr  
Maurice A. Charles  
David Paul Gardner  
John L. Hardiman  
Brian Shawn Mickey  
Ian Peele  
Tanner Ross Versage  
Alicia Dawn Williamson

### Master of Arts in Counseling

William Alexander Courington

### Master of Divinity

Jake Chism  
Christean Covington  
Kyle Dingus  
Logan Hollinsaid  
Addison Scott Keele  
Samuel E. Marlow Jr.  
Scott Andrew McFarland  
Mary Cana Moore  
Benjamin Nicholas  
Joshua Caleb Parnell  
Anthony Ray Powell  
Lucas Alexander Suddreth  
Morrisa Watson Summers

### Doctor of Ministry

Kent Michael Jobe  
Glen E. Knabe  
Allen Milton Stanley



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## News & Events

### Retiring Faculty Receive Emeritus Status

In educational circles, the status of emeritus is granted as an honor to professors who have done their job with distinction. Two retiring professors, Dr. Allen Black and Dr. Dave Bland, recently received this honor from HST. In addition, Dr. Ed Gray, longtime professor of counseling at HST, retired from the College of Education at Harding University and received the title of professor emeritus from that college.

**Allen Black** retired as dean and professor of New Testament, having served 38 years on the faculty and six years as dean. He was awarded the Distinguished Teacher Award from Harding University in 2000 and the Distinguished Christian Service Award from Pepperdine University in 2009. He and his wife, Nancy, have two adult daughters and are members of the Highland Church of Christ, where Allen continues to serve as a minister.

**Dave Bland** retired as professor of homiletics this Spring, having served 28 years on the faculty and 21 years as director of the Doctor of Ministry program. He was awarded the Outstanding Alumnus Award from Harding University in 2010 and the Distinguished Teacher Award from Harding University in 2017. He and his wife, Nancy, have three adult sons and are members of the Church of Christ at White Station.



L to R: Allen Black, Dave Bland, Ed Gray

Photo Credit: Matt Carter

**Ed Gray** was professor of counseling at HST for 24 years and at the College of Education for four years. He was awarded the Distinguished Teacher Award from Harding University in 2005 and the Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Profession from the Tennessee Association for Marriage and Family Therapy in 2012. He and his wife, Rhonda, have three adult sons and are members of the Highland Church of Christ.