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The Bridge

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Copy Editor
Jantzen Haley

Designer
Taylor O'Dell

Contributors
Don Meredith,
Allen Black,
Bob Turner, Mark Powell
Sheila Owen, Leon
Sanderson, Eli Randolph,
and Cana Moore

Photo Credits
Daniel Dubois
Alan Howell
Jeff Montgomery
Matt Carter

Church of Christ at White Station

Harding School of Theology
1000 Cherry Road
Memphis, TN 38117

Vice President's Office

901-432-7719
jimmartin@hst.edu

Dean's Office

901-432-7721
dean@hst.edu

Associate Dean's Office

901-432-7733
smcleod@hst.edu

Admissions Office

800-680-0809
hstadmissions@hst.edu

Advancement Office

901-432-7723
hstadvancement@hst.edu

Library Office

901-432-7731
rjturner@hst.edu

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NEWS & EVENTS

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Wes Hargon

(photo credit: Matt Carter)



Left to right: Ruth Herring and Jerry Blair

JERRY BLAIR (1917-2019) *By Don Meredith*

In 1967 Geraldine “Jerry” Blair became secretary to Dr. W.B. West Jr., the first dean of HST. She was the oldest child of Bertha and William Echols Sr. After she graduated from Hume Fogg High School in Nashville, Tennessee, she made her home in Montgomery, Alabama. She married W.R. “Bill” Blair in Montgomery in November 1939. They had a son, Robert, and daughter, Eleanor Frances.

Jerry served as Dr. West’s secretary until the summer of 1972 when she became secretary to his successor, Dr. Harold Hazelip. She retired in December 1982 after 15 years of service. In the notice of her retirement her tenure was summarized, “She is cheerful, competent — and all of those things this office has needed her to be.” When asked about Jerry, people’s responses were always very similar. “She was a joy to be with, a special lady, and had a pleasant spirit.” Jerry was very helpful to new staff who came to work at HST, and with her effervescent personality they found an amiable and hospitable environment in which to work. Jeannine Thweatt, her fellow staff member, commented that a few minutes with Jerry in the

morning was a great way to start the day. Everyone enjoyed hearing Jerry’s humorous anecdotes about her years with the deans and wished she had gotten around to writing her book, *The Dean and Geraldine*. She wrote a booklet on the history of the old mansion at HST that is still the basis of our mansion brochure today.

After her retirement Jerry lived in Memphis and Plano, Texas. She married her second husband, John H. Schlosser Jr., in 2001. Jerry spent her last six years at Kirby Pines Retirement Community in Memphis. She died on Oct. 20, 2019, at the age of 102 years and 3 months.

Reflections FROM THE Dean



Photo Credit: Jeff Montgomery

Dr. Allen Black

A Tribute to Jane Tomlinson

By Dr. Allen Black, HST Dean

On Dec. 15, 2018, at a gathering in celebration of her 90th birthday, I had the privilege of presenting a plaque from HST to Jane Tomlinson. This award for Outstanding Christian Service honored Jane as a:

Devoted Servant of Jesus Christ and His church,
Who gave 40 years of sacrificial service
to Harding School of Theology
serving in several capacities
(in the bookstore, business office, and as faculty secretary)
until becoming the Dean's Administrative Assistant
to Deans Hazelip, Slate, Myers, Flatt, and Huffard.
Who set a high standard for excellence
that continues to be remembered and emulated.

Our beloved Jane Tomlinson passed away Sept. 2, 2019. Her legacy at HST lives on in the work of her son, Cecil, who was raised on our campus and is in his 23rd year as an employee — most of those focused on maintaining our buildings and grounds. It also lives on through the spirit of her dedication to HST and the high standard of excellence she set for all of us.

Harding's Graduate School of Religion moved to Memphis in the fall of 1958. Jane was hired early in 1959. She served HST until her retirement in December 2001 except for a five-year period (1973-1978 — described by Harold Hazelip as “the longest sabbatical on record”) during which she and her husband, Roland, were away from Memphis. She worked in the business office and bookstore five years, in the registrar's office five years, and as faculty secretary 15 years. In 1982 she became administrative assistant to the dean, working with Harold Hazelip. Later she served as administrative assistant for Deans Slate, Myers, Flatt, and Huffard. After Jane's retirement from full-time work she worked part-time in 2002 and 2003 on various fundraising projects.

She continued to fundraise because she was always good at it. Jane was very strongly pro-HST, she knew our alumni well, and she did not mind asking them to give. I remember evenings when several

of us came in for phone-a-thons during the years Dr. Bill Flatt was dean. There was an ongoing contest between Bill and Jane over who could raise the most in gifts and pledges. No one else was even close in the competition for the top slot.

Jane could do that because she knew our alumni well. She took well-warranted pride in knowing our graduates, their families, and their ministries. She set a high standard in this area that continues today in my administrative assistant, Brenda Curtis, to whom I often turn for help with my own deficiencies in this arena.

Another high standard in which Jane took pride was proofreading guided research papers, theses, and dissertations. She was remarkable in her knowledge of the English language and the rules of Kate Turabian's style guide. In fact, she helped Don Meredith write the original HST Supplement to Turabian and worked on the updates until her retirement. Jane was meticulous in her attention to the details of everything she read. She got an education in Bible and theology by reading voluminously in our students' capstone writings. Cecil remembers her almost always having a box with some student's capstone work next to her easy chair at home.

In every area of work Jane set a high standard for HST's staff. When I think of our school's founders I think primarily of four persons who led the way in four areas: W.B. West in administration, Jack Lewis in teaching and research, Annie May Alston Lewis in the library, and Jane Tomlinson on staff. Each of these four exemplified excellence in their arena of service for HST. Each set the bar high for all of us who follow.

Jane did her work with excellence despite many years of struggling with the pain of rheumatoid arthritis. She rarely mentioned her health issues and continued striving for excellence with a bright smile on her face.

No one loved our school more than Jane Tomlinson. We are grateful for all she did for us.



Jane Tomlinson

LIBRARY UNVEILS

“Every Voice: A Portrait of African American Churches of Christ” BY ELLA KENNIN By Bob Turner



WHAT: A 16x20 graphite on paper with embedded dried flowers. **WHO:** Ella Kennin is a first-year student at the University of Memphis. She is also a member of the Church of Christ at White Station. Her art has been featured in various exhibitions in Memphis, including the South Main Arts District.

Top (L-R): Annie C. Tuggle, Marshall Keeble, Sylvia Rose

Bottom (L-R): Fred Gray, R.N. Hogan, G.P. Bowser, Samuel R. Cassius

A significant crowd gathered at the library of Harding School of Theology for the unveiling of Ella Kennin’s artwork on Oct. 17, 2019. In addition to seeing the art, guests could read about the figures on panels mounted around the library. The event included a piece of spoken word poetry by Wesley Hargon, HST student and youth minister at the Millington Church of Christ.

Dr. Harold Redd, Harding University board member and preacher at Midtown Church of Christ, said of the event: “I was glad HST unveiled art that recognized African Americans who significantly contributed to God’s kingdom. Interestingly, the artwork was superbly done by a young white lady whose subjects are old enough to be her grandparents and even great-grandparents. Overall, the reception was an excellent exhibition of the unity intended by the cross!”

The image now hangs at the entrance of the Meredith Restoration History Archive.

Student Association Hosts Student Colloquium

By Eli Randolph & Cana Moore

Through the inspiration of Student Association Vice President Eli Randolph, the SA hosted a colloquium on Oct. 17, 2019. Four students were given an opportunity to present research they had conducted in the previous school year for critical engagement with faculty and fellow students. The categories were Old Testament, New Testament, systematic theology, and historical theology. Professors in each area selected students to present research. The presenters were Benji Nicholas in Old Testament: “The Sounds of Praise to the King: A Poetic Exploration of Psalm 98;” Alicia Williamson in New Testament: “The Gospel of Luke and His Portrayal of Women;” Eli Randolph in systematic theology: “Divine Impassibility in the Work of

David Bentley Hart;” and Cory Spruiell in historical theology: “J.D. Bales’ Eschatological Heritage.”

Both Randolph and Spruiell presented research related to their ongoing thesis work. Two presenters joined and read their papers through HST Live, while current students and alumni were invited to listen to the papers and participate in the time of discussion through the HST Live session. This was an excellent opportunity for presenting students to hone their skills and for the rest of the student body to hear what our fellow classmates had been researching.

Spiritual Mentoring Groups By Mark Powell

Ministers can be competent leaders and still not be spiritual leaders. To address this challenge, HST offers spiritual mentoring groups for students who have completed at least 21 hours of coursework. A total of six groups, composed of seven faculty and staff members and 25 students, met in 2019. New groups are scheduled to begin in Fall 2020. Both on-campus groups and LIVE groups, which meet through video conferencing, are offered.

Groups meet every other week for approximately one hour. Meetings include times of silence and prayer, sharing the story of each participant's spiritual journey, and discussing spiritual challenges in life and ministry. Ruth Haley Barton's *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (InterVarsity Press, 2018), which explores the life and leadership of Moses, and a guide developed for the groups are used as a basis for the discussions.

HST pursues excellence in scholarship and the practice of ministry. The spiritual formation of students, however, is the most important thing we do to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry. Based on surveys we receive from graduates and alumni, HST has always fostered the spiritual growth of students through our courses, chapel, and mentoring relationships.

In recent years, HST has more intentionally addressed spiritual formation by (1) requiring participation in a spiritual formation retreat as part of 5990 Advanced Theological Research (at the beginning of all degree programs), (2) requiring a course with a significant spiritual formation component for the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry and Master of Divinity degrees, (3) offering 5901 Spiritual Leadership as a core course option for the Master of Divinity degree, and now (4) offering spiritual mentoring groups for students as they advance in their studies. The goal of these efforts is simple: we want HST graduates to continue to be both competent leaders and spiritual leaders.

Our alumni may benefit from starting their own spiritual mentoring group with other ministers and adapting the discussion guide developed for HST students. *For more information on starting a spiritual mentoring group, contact Mark Powell at mpowell@harding.edu.*

“ The spiritual formation of students ... is the most important thing we do to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry. ”



Dr. Pat and Shirley Casey recently established an endowed scholarship at HST for students seeking to serve in pulpit ministries.



Earl Priest passed away in Memphis, Tennessee, at the age of 97 on Nov. 9, 2019.

Earl and his late wife, Willene, were faithful Christians and great supporters of Harding University and Harding School of Theology. The Duane Priest scholarship for pre-med students has assisted Harding undergraduates for decades. The scholarship was named for the Priests' only child, who was killed in a tragic car accident while Duane was a pre-med student at Harding College. The Earl and Willene Priest Endowed Scholarship assists numerous graduate students at HST each year. These two scholarships, funded by the Priests, are a lasting memorial to lives spent in Christian service.

Servants in Training

By Sheila Owen

Meet **Alicia Williamson** (M.A. in systematic theology) and **Rachel Howell** (M.A. in historical theology), students who will graduate in May 2020. Both women have served as missionaries with their husbands: Williamson in New Jersey (2004-2018), and Howell in Mozambique (2004-2018).



Alicia Williamson with Family - Photo Credit: Daniel Dubois



Rachel Howell - Photo Credit: Alan Howell

Why the Master of Arts? **AW:** I have felt a love for teaching God's word and sharing life and faith with others for as long as I can remember, and I sought to grow deeper in my knowledge of scripture. My goal is to teach Bible to better equip the students and mission teams we work with here at Harding. I hope to pursue a doctorate upon the completion of my M.A.

RH: I want conversation partners, space to ask all my questions, access to deeper resources, and accountability for the responsibility of teaching others. One of my deepest desires is to be better equipped to help churches and college students navigate the current changes in society, especially the need for articulating a more robustly theological hermeneutic.

How do you reorient yourself when so many issues and needs pull at our attention? **AW:** Prayer and meditation bring encouragement in difficult days. I journal and find strength in looking back to see how God has answered my prayers. As a family, we try to take a time of sabbath each week.

RH: I spend a lot of time in the prophets; Jeremiah grounded me through deep struggles, and Amos was in my head almost daily trying to figure out how to live generously among very poor people. [I ask myself] "What do I really want?" (not hedonism but introspection) and "What stories am I telling myself right now?"

What do you wish someone had told you when you were growing up? **AW:** God is much bigger than we can imagine. He is able to do impossible things if we get out of the way and let Him. God's word is powerful and needs to be read and shared every day.

You lean on the church as your family. Our church family loved us through the loss of an adoption, the struggle of becoming new parents, and the difficulty of loving people that walk away from faith.

RH: That women can major in Bible and ministry and be theologians. That parenting is really, really hard, and it is OK not to always like it every minute. That people wound other people because they are wounded themselves, and sometimes a conflict is about an earlier wound.

What do you wish more Christians knew about mission work? **AW:** No matter where you live, God has a purpose and a mission for you right in that place. Mission work involves having His eyes to see those around you who need to hear the good news of the gospel, [who] are longing for hope. Prayer is vital to the life and work of God's people. This is one thing I wish that I could go back and change — pray more, worry less.

RH: I wish my friends in the U.S. could meet my friends in Mozambique and worship together and learn from each other! Also, that the humility of cultural learning [is] a valuable orientation tool. All ministry is both beautiful and hard.

AN Open Letter TO HST ALUMNI



Courtesy of the Church of Christ at White Station

Leon Sanderson

Greetings, graduates!

If you are like me, you look back fondly on your time spent at HST in pursuit of theological education. Take comfort that a new generation of Christian leaders is answering the call of service through scholarship and sacrifice.

The HST Alumni Council solicits your recommendation for the 2020 Alumnus/Alumna of the Year Award. The award will be presented at the school's spring donor appreciation luncheon on April 23, 2020. As you consider an HST graduate to nominate, you may wish to reflect on this year's spiritual theme, "Peaceable Kingdom," and the theme verse, Isaiah 11:9.

Candidate prerequisites:

- Degree from HST
- Experience in Christian service and influence
- Affinity and advocacy for HST
- Non-recipient of this award in previous years

Your nomination should include written responses to the following criteria:

1. Alumnus/Alumna name
2. Length of acquaintance with nominee
3. Length of nominee's ministry
4. Nominee's relationship with Harding School of Theology
5. Description and influence of nominee's ministry
6. How the nominee exemplifies the 2019-20 theme of "Peaceable Kingdom"

Please submit your nomination by Feb. 14, 2020. Electronic correspondence should be emailed to hstadvancement@hst.edu. Non-electronic correspondence should be mailed to HST: c/o Advancement Director, 1000 Cherry Road, Memphis, TN 38117. Feel free to re-submit nominees from previous years. We have so many good candidates from which to choose.

Thanks for your continued interest in HST and its ongoing success. May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face shine upon you always.

For the Alumni Council,
Leon Sanderson

FACULTY & STAFF NEWS

HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Matt Carter hosted a reception for the Young Ministers Network at the Harding Lectureship; spoke at the SOMA campus ministry at University of Memphis; and spoke at a college student retreat for the Senatobia Church of Christ (Northwest Mississippi Community College).

Dr. Carlus Gupton presented leadership trainings in Fairfax, Virginia, and at the Mountain Men Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; conducted virtual and onsite team building sessions with The Coker Group in Atlanta; participated in the annual meeting of Hope Network Ministries; consulted on leadership and effective governance with the board of Health Talents International; and facilitated professional coaching sessions with church leaders on DISC profile, Birkman Method, Team Dimensions, and Integrative Enneagram.

Dr. Evertt W. Huffard was awarded the R. Vernon Boyd Diversity Award at Rochester University on Nov. 8 as a "Champion for the cause of reconciliation and bridging the racial divide." The award is named for Vernon Boyd

(M.A. 1955; D.Min. 1986), an HST alumnus who worked for years to bring about racial reconciliation in Detroit.

Dr. Huffard also spoke for the Hispanic preachers conference in Memphis, for Missions Sunday at Levy Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Arkansas, and for a leaders workshop for Concord Road Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee; did four presentations at Harding Lectureship on missions and Islam; presented three sessions at the Global Missions Conference in Austin, Texas, on church planting and Islam; consulted for a foundation for a ministry in Russia; and hosted a tour to Israel for the board of Missions Resource Network and participated in the MRN board meeting in Athens.

Bob Turner spoke at the fall retreat for SOMA, the campus ministry at University of Memphis; spoke at the retreat for HopeWorks in Memphis; and hosted "The World of the Bible" at Covington (Tennessee) Church of Christ, Como (Mississippi) Church of Christ, and Park Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

- M.A.** Master of Arts
- M.A.C.M.** Master of Arts in Christian Ministry
- M.Div.** Master of Divinity
- D.Min.** Doctor of Ministry
- C.S.L.** Certificate in Spiritual Leadership



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News & Events

