



Fall 2020

The College of Bible and Ministry of Harding University seeks to lead all students to know, live and share God's Word and to understand, love and serve God's world through and beyond their chosen vocation.

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ANDREW M. BRAXTER NAMED DIRECTOR OF CHURCH OUTREACH



Andrew M. Braxter

Andrew M. Braxter began serving as our new Director of Church Outreach effective August 10, according to Dr. Dan Williams, Vice-President for Church Relations. He replaces Alex Jamerison, who moved to Atlanta to preach for the Camp Creek Church of Christ.

Andrew is currently working on his Master of Divinity from the Harding School of Theology. He graduated from Southwestern Christian College in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Religious Studies. While at Southwestern he worked as the Assistant to the Vice-President for Public Relations and Development, taking the Summer Tour Ensemble around the country and speaking on behalf of the school.

Andrew has a passion for preaching the gospel of Christ, and is a highly sought-after speaker regionally and nationally on various special days, revivals, conferences, and lectureships. He is a native of Montgomery, Alabama and was added to the body of Christ at the New Harvest Church of Christ in Montgomery. He delivered his first sermon at the age of 8, traveled to his first preaching appointment away from home at the age of 12, and made his first address at the National Lectureship at the age of 21.

He has been blessed to serve churches in Alabama, Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma and has been mentored by Richard Barclay. Andrew currently serves as the Senior Minister to the Rose City Community Church of Christ in North Little Rock, Arkansas. He is a strong believer in Christian education and looks forward to representing Harding University.

CATCHING UP WITH.....Dr. Carl Williamson

Last fall Dr. Carl Williamson was named the first person to hold the Andy T. Ritchie, Jr. Distinguished Chair of Discipleship & Church Planting here at Harding University. We persuaded Dr. Williamson to take a few minutes from his busy schedule to answer some questions for this issue of *Salt, Leaven and Light*.

SLL: First, Dr. Williamson, congratulations on your appointment! What has your first year been like?

WILLIAMSON: My first year back at Harding has been complicated. On the one hand, I have loved being back on campus. It has reminded me of the days that Alicia and I met and fell in love. It has brought back sweet memories of our church plant team forming in the corridors of the McInteer Bible building and Mabee Business building. It has been a wonderful reunion with friends and faculty members.

I would be lying, however, if I didn't tell of the difficulties. My family has struggled with transitioning from the mission field back to Searcy. It has been difficult to leave our church family in New Jersey and our sense of calling to that population. I am often remembering that this world is not our home. The call to be a disciple of Jesus is one that includes the complications of both joy and pain.

SLL: Some of our readers may not recognize the name Andy T. Ritchie, Jr. Can you tell us something about him, and why this newly created chair was named after him?

WILLIAMSON: Andy T. Ritchie (1909-1983) was one of the greatest and most important spiritual influences on Harding students who attended from 1946-1974. He lived and breathed being a disciple and brought to life the faith, teachings and person of Jesus Christ in and out of the classroom. He directed large choruses, taught Bible, preached meetings, hosted Monday night meetings with students, and chaired the Tuesday evening evangelism meetings. He spent summers leading campaigns and accompanied groups of students to work at Christian camps.

Through his teaching and mentoring Ritchie inspired students and his colleagues to live a God-directed life. Those influenced by him went on to become foreign missionaries, church planters, and the founders of new Christian colleges. During his tenure at Harding, he visited more than sixty missionary families (many of whom were his former students) in twenty different countries. He made a habit of taking interest in, and sharing faith with, any of his students who were not yet Christians. This endowment is named after Andy T. Ritchie in hopes that the person who occupies this chair will exercise the same kind of spiritual fervor and courageous faith to generate interest in missions, recruit church planters, and mentor students in Christ-like living.



Continued on page 3

CATCHING UP WITH.....Dr. Carl Williamson

Continued from page 2



Carl Williamson

SLL: Why do you believe it is important to have a chair of Discipleship & Church Planting at Harding University?

WILLIAMSON: Discipleship and church planting work side by side in spreading the good news about Jesus to "all the nations." I believe that having a chair position puts at the forefront of our Bible department the need for training young people to be unashamed to share their faith in Jesus. Harding has been actively involved in making disciples and sending out church planters from its inception. However, the creation of this new position reinvigorates our identity as a school that is on mission.

SLL: As you look back over your own life journey, what do you feel are some of the factors that have led you to this work?

WILLIAMSON: My mom and dad met and married during a summer door knocking campaign with Owen Olbricht. My grandmother answered the door and told my dad that she was not interested in studying the Bible, but that he could come by and study with her daughter. After marriage, my parents joined a mission team that was heading to Sweden where I eventually called home. The experience of my parents sharing faith with others and doing home Bible studies greatly impacted my desire to be a minister of the gospel and specifically a church planter.

During one of my Bible classes at Harding we studied the book of Acts and my roommate Scott Penick and I began discussing the most effective ways to reach lost people. It seemed to both of us that church planting was both biblical and effective. This is what began our journey towards the formation of a team to start churches in New Jersey.

SLL: What is your vision for this position? And, how does it involve the students?

WILLIAMSON: My vision for discipleship and church planting is to train students to be disciple-makers. First, I believe that discipleship and church planting both begin with spiritual disciplines. If we want churches to grow it is going to take a move of God. We plant and water, but God is the one who brings the increase. Therefore, I have been teaching a lot about prayer and fasting. I had a 60-hour fasting retreat. Upon their return several of the students have begun a 7:30 am Tuesday/Thursday prayer meeting, another group is meeting and praying on Tuesday's at 7 am, and others have been doing a once-a-month fast.

Second, I believe that equipping students with Bible study techniques and church planting resources helps build confidence and courage.

Continued on page 4

CATCHING UP WITH.....Dr. Carl Williamson

Continued from page 3

Third, I have been building cohorts of students who meet together to share answers to prayer, ongoing Bible studies, and lessons about discipleship.

Finally, I believe the discipleship and church planting position must connect with local churches. The work of discipleship and church planting happens through the Lord's Church. For this reason, I have been meeting with several local churches to help establish a shift in culture towards discipleship.

SLL: There was a time in our history when church planting was much more common than it has been in recent years. Why do you think the pace of church planting slowed down?

WILLIAMSON: I believe that one of the reasons that church planting and discipleship has slowed down in churches of Christ is that we have forgotten there are lost people in our community. That phrase is going to sound too simplistic, but the reality is that while we still recognize there are people who do not know Jesus in our communities, we have begun assuming they are unwilling to change or that we simply need more skills to reach them.



It is much more comfortable to sit in a class where we learn new principles than it is to go out and begin sharing the gospel. It is easier to assume that people will not obey the gospel than it is to ask people to respond to the gospel. Thom Rainer asked a group of ten ministers to invite one person to

church each week to help the congregation to once again become outward-focused. Eight of the ten did the assignment and their churches began growing. The point is simply to say that all of us can make a difference by doing one small thing. We share the good news about Jesus with others every week.

SLL: After serving in this position for a year, what has made you most hopeful?

WILLIAMSON: The students at Harding are some of the most faith-filled Christian young men and women. They give me great hope for the future of God's kingdom in America and the world. I believe this generation of students are eager to share faith and I have seen an increase in courage to be bold like the early disciples. I am equally encouraged by their church families because I recognize that these students come to Harding already transformed into the likeness of Jesus. Several parents have reached out to get resources, recommendations of books, and speakers to encourage their home congregations. I have met many church leaders who attend lectureship, preaching seminars, or events at Harding who are excited about shifting the culture of churches back towards an obedience to the great commission.

I am most encouraged by what I see God doing on campus. Last semester, one of the students I have been training to do Bible studies baptized the young man he had been studying with and I was able to stand by to watch God's mighty work. One morning this semester, I prayed that God would send students who wanted to be followers of Jesus to my office. Later that morning a young lady came by and shared that

Continued on page 5

IMPORTANT NOTICE – LECTURESHIP RESCHEDULED FOR 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many uncertainties in our world and forced countless changes in our lives. As a result, after careful and prayerful consideration we have decided it would be prudent to postpone this fall's Harding Bible Lectureship until next year. Mark your calendars for September 26-29 2021 and plan to join us then as we turn to the book of Daniel and learn how to have "Courageous Faith in Troubled Times."

CATCHING UP WITH.....Dr. Carl Williamson

Continued from page 4

she wanted to be baptized. I asked why she came to my office and she explained that my name was on her heart as she was making this decision. Later that day, one of her friends who had been studying with this student baptized her into Christ. The next week a young man stopped me at the bottom of the stairs in the McInter Bible Building and asked if we could talk. I had never met him before, but he decided to be baptized into Jesus later that day.

SLL: What are some of the plans you have for the future?

WILLIAMSON: My plans to promote discipleship and church planting at Harding are to work under the heading "OutReach America." The Center for World Missions at Harding encourages students to be missionaries and one aspect of our missions work is to start doing missions in America.

OutReach America identifies, equips, and coaches disciple makers and church planters. We work with students, churches, and campus ministries to Reach Out through Discipleship & Church Planting in North America. We believe that disciples of Jesus actively participate in the kingdom of God through "making and maturing" disciples. The process of discipleship leads to the renewal and starting of new churches. OutReach America wants to work with you to bring a revival to America!

Faculty Notes—Fall 2020

Jason Darden was one of the keynote speakers at this summer's virtual UpLift program. He also completed Phase One of the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Dr. Allen Diles presented "The Purpose for Which We Have Been Spared," a video presentation on Cyprian for *A Light in the Darkness*, ed. Nathan Guy, episode 22, April 16, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lk53diPuOjQ&t=11s>. In addition, Dr. Diles has had his manuscript *Let Truth Prevail: An Introduction to European Christian Renewal Movements* accepted by ACU Press for Publication in 2021.

Dr. Jordan Guy co-hosted a Disciple-Making Forum with Dr. Carl Williamson for Searcy Churches of Christ (<https://www.collegechurchofchrist.org/Mission-Love-Searcy>). He facilitated a minister's retreat for College Church, and taught and coached preaching students in the Kerusso Experience. He published a review of Glenn Pemberton's *A Life That Is Good in Restoration Quarterly* (2020): Vol. 62, No. 3. His 2019 published dissertation, *United in Exile, Reunited in Restoration: The Chronicler's Agenda*, was recently reviewed by three journals, including the *Society of Biblical Literature*.

Dr. Carl Williamson completed the certification on the "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" Course. In addition, he spoke at the College Church of Christ in Searcy, Arkansas for their Disciple Making Forum "Mission Love Searcy." All of the presentations can be found at: <https://www.collegechurchofchrist.org/DMFS>

Dr. Kevin Youngblood contributed a chapter to an edited volume on prayer in the Hebrew Bible. The title of his chapter is "A House of Prayer for All Nations? Temple, Prayer, and Xenophobia in Ezra 9 and 1 Kings 8." The title of the book is *Talking with God: Prayer in the Hebrew Bible*. It is due to be published early in 2021 by Wipf & Stock. The volume is co-edited by Phillip Camp and Elaine Phillips.

Dr. Dale W. Manor gave a virtual presentation on July 1 for the Greymere Church of Christ in Columbia, Tennessee. The topic was: "Abraham, What did You See?" On July 8, he spoke for the West End Church of Christ in the St. Louis area. The invited topic was: "On the Reliability of the Old Testament."

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Uplift I, II and III
Canceled

Harding Lectureship 2020
Postponed

Abundant Living Retreat
Branson, Missouri
Oct. 6-9, 2020

Virtual Homecoming
October 29 - 31, 2020

3rd Annual Harding Preaching Conference
"Preaching the Book of Job"
Feb. 16, 2021

BLOOM Conference
(formerly W.I.N.G.S.)
Feb. 19-20, 2021

Spring Sing
TBA

Harding's 97th Annual Bible Lectureship
"INVINCIBLE! Courageous Faith in Troubled Times"
A Study of the book of Daniel
Sept. 26-29, 2021

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