Graduation 2014

The Austin Graduate School of Theology Commencement was held May 18, 2014 at the Brentwood Christian School Center for Science and the Arts. After a welcome by President Reid, Dr. Daniel Napier led the invocation, and Dr. Keith Stanglin led “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name.”

Dr. James Thompson, currently the Robert and Kay Onstead Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University and editor of “Restoration Quarterly,” gave the commencement address. He urged the graduates “not to lose heart,” reminding them graduation is a time of transition—a time to look back and to look forward—as new doors open. Quoting Paul, Dr. Thompson encouraged them to understand their real credentials will be the lives that they have a part in changing. Dr. Stan Reid, Mr. Fred Strietelmeier, Dr. Jeffrey Peterson, and Dr. Keith Stanglin participated in the presentation of diplomas.

**Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and Christian Studies** — Roy F. Jones

**Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies** — Michelle Renae Griffin, James Raegan Hays, Henry Williams Mitchell, Jr., Jason E. Niesing, Jared Michael Taylor

**Master of Arts in Theological Studies** — James Ponnomil Abraham, Malartha Bosier, Joe C. Drisdale, Thomas Scott Elliott, George David Gordon, Ronald Raybern Hall, Andrea Kalea Hendrick, Spencer L. W. Prather, David N. Streeter, Ambre C. Tandy, Philip Andrew Vick

A charge to the graduating class, led by a member of the Board of Trustees, was followed by “The Church’s One Foundation” led by Dr. Stanglin, with a benediction by Dr. Mark Shipp concluding the commencement.
Theological education in the United States is changing, and Austin Grad is changing with it. In April, AGST announced the launch of an online BA degree-completion program in the fall semester of 2014 and began recruiting students for this program.

“The initial goal is to enroll 10–15 new undergraduate students whose circumstances do not permit them to take advantage of Austin Grad’s on-campus BA degree program in Christian Studies,” explained Jeff Peterson, faculty and interim online BA coordinator.

The announcement follows more than a year of study and deliberation by the administration, board, and faculty, including consultation with peer institutions and experts in online education. “Our hope is that making an undergraduate degree available to students online will allow us to expand the scope of our mission geographically and generationally,” said President Stan Reid.

The initial online course offerings will focus on the courses required for the BA major. Courses scheduled for offer in the fall semester include Research and Writing in Theology, Jesus and the Gospels, and the Story of Israel.

Members of the on-campus faculty will take a leading role in the development and offer of these courses, with additional faculty members (both full- and part-time) to be recruited as growth in enrollment warrants. Peterson said an initial staffing goal for the 2014–15 academic year is to identify a permanent online BA coordinator to oversee the administration of the program.

Research and Writing in Theology will be taught by Todd Hall, AGST library director. He holds the MATS from AGST and MLIS from North Texas State University.

Jesus and the Gospels will be taught by Jeff Peterson, Jack C. and Ruth Wright Professor of New Testament (MA, ACU; MDiv., Princeton Theological Seminary; PhD, Yale University)

Story of Israel will be taught by Les Maloney, BA, Lubbock Christian University; MA, Harding School of Theology; PhD, Baylor University.
This issue of Update gives attention to our recent graduation ceremony and annual Sermon Seminar. Before I comment on those events, I want to say farewell to the past editor of our newsletter and welcome the new one. Cynthia Agnell served well as the editor of Update for several years. Cynthia continues to volunteer at our school. Her service and friendship is a blessing. We welcome Carol Gafford as Cynthia’s successor. Carol, like Cynthia, is an alumna of Austin Grad. Carol will bring a nice touch to this important work of keeping our alumni, friends, and partners informed about the good things happening at our school.

As mentioned above we recently hosted two events that were vivid reminders of our mission to promote knowledge, understanding, and practice of the Christian faith by equipping Christians and churches for service in the Kingdom of God. On a sunny Sunday afternoon we watched 17 candidates for graduation walk the stage. We pray that God will protect and empower these graduates to be faithful and effective servants in the church.

The day after graduation over 90 people assembled for the 33rd annual Sermon Seminar. Participants came from Texas and across the country. Challenging Bible study, fellowship, and the need for refreshment bring them here. Bible class teachers, as well as preachers, benefit greatly from what is offered. Excellent lectures were presented by Jim Martin, Glenn Pemberton, Keith Stanglin, James Thompson, and Phil Thompson. John Harp made a lunch presentation describing how the Sunset Ridge Church of Christ in San Antonio partners with Austin Grad.

Sermon Seminar is another way that our school fulfills its mission to serve the church by equipping its preachers and teachers. This year I invited Austin Grad alumni who hold our master’s degree to deliver the homilies at the worship times. Scott Elliott, Charlie Johanson, Greg Neill, Matt Porter, Allen Ritchie and Allan Stanglin all made presentations that confirmed how well prepared they are.

I estimate that every Sunday about 2000 people hear these six men preach and teach. Multiply that by the number of people influenced by those 2000 and we see how far reaching the work done at Austin Grad is. Broaden that to include the service of all those who have studied here and we see that the good influence and growth is exponential.

One final comment about this edition of Update is needed. At the center of the newsletter is the section titled “In Grateful Appreciation.” It is on those pages that we express our gratitude to the individuals, churches and foundations that partner with us in our mission. Their generosity makes it possible for Austin Grad to fulfill its mission. To everyone listed on those pages I say a sincere thank you. We pray that we are mutually blessed and that everything accomplished at Austin Grad is done in the name of Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, and to the glory of God.

From the President

On a sunny Sunday afternoon we watched 17 candidates for graduation walk the stage. We pray that God will protect and empower these graduates to be faithful and effective servants in the church.

We pray that we are mutually blessed and that everything accomplished at Austin Grad is done in the name of Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, and to the glory of God.

Friends’ Day

“Something special happens every Friends’ Day,” according to Stan Reid. He must be right, for the gathering on April 26 of friends at Austin Grad was a great day! From the first cup of coffee to conversations with others equally interested in Austin Grad, the energy was obvious. (When even the details of a board meeting capture interest, you know it’s a good day!)

Worship was followed by three students—David Boone, Cal Reed, Wayne Kruchten—who shared their personal journeys that led them to Austin Grad and their plans for the future. Jack Wright and Dave Arthur were honored for their years of support, leadership, and care for the school. Pictures below provide a visual story.
with grateful Appreciation... ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THOSE WHO HAVE GENEROSLY GIVEN IN SUPPORT OF AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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This list represents gifts received from Nov 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014

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Christ, Austin
With almost every seat filled and a strong sense of community and anticipation, the 33rd annual Sermon Seminar began. Jack Wright led the opening prayer, and worship was led by Matt Porter.

Dr. James Thompson is the Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Theology, chair of the Graduate Department of Bible and Ministry, and Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University. His BA and MA are from ACU, with his PhD from Vanderbilt University. Prior to his coming to ACU, he served as professor and President of Austin Graduate School of Theology. Addressing his topic, Rediscovering the Church, Dr. Thompson suggested the church does have a lot to account for since too often our understanding of the church is taken from models in the world. He reminded us that “you” in Paul’s letters to churches is not singular. Though we are brought together as strangers, Christ began a good work in “y’all.” Emphasizing we are more than a collection of individuals, he urged us to recapture the essence of being the body of Christ, not measured by human standards, not like any other creation or model, but a new humanity.

Dr. Glenn Pemberton teaches Old Testament classes, including Devotional and Wisdom Literature of the OT and Introduction to Exegesis. He serves as Chair of the Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry. His PhD is from the University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology. Addressing “After Lament: Psalms for learning to trust again,” Dr. Pemberton suggested that in our lament we set the forms for the conversations – the prayers, the questions, the struggle to solve difficulties. And “when lament is over, and we didn’t get what we asked for, then the getting to trust prepares us for “no” and a readiness to trust our God.”

Dr. Jim Martin, Vice President of the Harding School of Theology in Memphis, Tennessee, addressed Social Media as a Ministry Tool.

Dr. Philip Thompson earned his DMin at Harding University Graduate School and now teaches classes in Homiletics and Ethics at Harding. Believing these issues are basically overlooked in our churches today, he called for relevant sermons on contemporary bioethical issues. While sermons based on these topics may be uncomfortable for both preacher and pew, Dr. Thompson insisted the church must examine biblical principles applicable to these issues if we are to make ethical decisions. As responsible Christians, he strongly suggests we provide biblical and relevant teaching through specifically designed Bible classes. Believing these issues may possibly affect many of us through family and friends, preparation from a Christian perspective is essential.

Dr. Keith Stanglin is an Associate Professor of Scripture and Historical Theology, Austin Graduate School of Theology. His PhD is from Harding University Graduate School of Theology, and he received a PhD from Calvin Theological Seminary in Reformation and Post-Reformation Theology. His topic: “The Restoration of God’s People: Preaching from Acts.” His opening claim: “Acts is our book,” referring to churches of Christ, “we’ve got Acts,” and we come with an opinion and certain expectations. Describing Acts as a “canon within the canon,” or our “plan of salvation,” Dr. Stanglin suggests our treatment of Acts causes us to overlook too much before Acts and even in the five steps.” The question, “Where are we now?” emerges along with another question: “Where is the church? Do we need to hear Acts again?”

Extra Note: Dr. Allan McNicol has attended every Sermon Seminar since it began in 1981. He believes the success has been in the combination of serious Bible study and personal growth—a kind of intentional revival. Then he added, “The Sermon Seminar is a place to come and get your tank filled.”
News & Notes

Frances Louise Oliver Horn

A wonderful friend of Austin Grad, Frances Horn passed away December 28, 2013 in Austin, Texas at the age of 94. Born in San Antonio August 16, 1919 to Dick Rodrick Oliver and Frances Elizabeth Eoff Oliver, she grew up on a farm in Asherton, attended John Tarleton JC in Stephenville and moved to Austin in 1938 to work at the TEC. She married Norman Leon Horn on October 26, 1949. After her children were in school, Frances went to work at the Biblical Studies Center where she served 17 years as receptionist, secretary, librarian, bookkeeper, friend, counselor, and Mom. She was a devoted wife and mother for 32 years, a widow and grandmother for 32 years and a lifelong member of the University Avenue Church of Christ.

Frances is survived by two sons, Gary (Christina) Horn of O’Fallon, MO, and Darrell (Pam) Horn of Abilene, a daughter Sheryl Horn of Austin, two grandchildren, three granddaughters, and six great-grandchildren, and many other relatives and countless friends.

Memorials may be made to Horn Scholarship Fund
Austin Graduate School of Theology, 7640 Guadalupe St., Austin, TX 78752.

Library Resources

A few years ago, Austin Grad’s David Worley Library hit a milestone: we passed 30,000 catalogued items. This is significant for many reasons, not least of which is the legacy it represents—the legacy of dedicated servants in their development of this library in the past. This legacy began with G.H.P. Showalter and others, and continues through Patrick Graham, Gary Holloway, Wade Osburn, and Jon Aho. Indeed, as a student at Austin Grad I have been a beneficiary of their careful stewardship, and I now count myself blessed to be caretaker of this legacy.

A part of the legacy of this library, as built by each of my predecessors, is dedicated service both to students and churches as well as the local community. In keeping with this commitment, Austin Grad’s library remains open to church members interested in theological research, and we invite you to make use of our facilities and resources. In addition, I am available to anyone interested in reference support in his or her own research. And now, a couple of book recommendations:

Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). Professor Daniel Napier taught a course on Willard this past Spring semester, and this book, so vital to Willard’s theology of spiritual transformation, is one to which I find myself returning again and again.

James K.A. Smith, Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). In keeping with the theme of spiritual transformation, I highly recommend struggling with James Smith’s book. One will find it applicable to much more than formal theological education and worship: Ken Myers of Mars Hill Audio Journal suggests it could be a book for parenting as well.

M. Todd Hall
Director of the Library
Austin Graduate School of Theology

visionaryPhilanthropy

Visionary Philanthropy at Austin Grad: It’s All About the Mission

A number of surveys involving both donors and charitable organizations indicate the primary reason people give is to support the mission of the organization. We find that to be true at Austin Grad.

A gift to Austin Grad must be pleasing to the donor as well as meaningful to the school. We often say to our donors, “We hope you get as much joy from giving as we do from receiving your gift.”

To assure our donors are pleased, we must first be certain our mission is worthy. We believe the mission of Austin Grad is blessed by God because its purpose is to equip people for service in his kingdom.

Our alumni serve far and wide. From the small rural church in Texas to the large metropolitan congregation in major cities, you will find those who have studied at Austin Grad. You will also find them in remote corners of the United States and in some foreign mission sites.

Our mission statement reads:
To promote knowledge, understanding, and practice of the Christian faith by equipping Christians and churches for service in the kingdom of God.

This is a mission that never ages or goes out of date. God’s kingdom is everlasting and must be sustained by us, his servants.

We are eternally grateful for so many who believe in our mission and who have chosen to be part of it through their loyal and generous gifts. One of the most satisfying reasons to support Austin Grad is the long-range nature of the mission. It is a mission that will continue and will be as dynamic in future years as it is now.

As you consider your charitable gifts, please continue to be a member of our team. If you have yet to do so, we ask you to make your gift now. Those who study at Austin Grad are very aware of the important support of visionary philanthropists. Your support assures the highest level of instruction by the finest professors.

Your gifts enable some students to pursue their dream of attending Austin Grad without amassing the debt that can often accompany education. Scholarship funds established by thoughtful and generous friends are so important to these students.

Gifts given to the annual fund through Lightbearers and Keepers of the Flame serve a special purpose. They assure Austin Grad has the resources to provide for the needs of its students and professors in providing the educational services each day of the school year. Gifts of all amounts and frequency are greatly appreciated.

There are other ways to support Austin Grad through visionary philanthropy. We will be happy to send you a brochure on one of the following subjects or to answer any questions you may have. We will gladly do so without obligation. Just call our office, send us a note, or email us.

- Pay for a Day: A Philanthropic Tradition
- Gifts of Property: With Retained Life Estate
- Guaranteed Income for Life: The Charitable Gift Annuity
- Ensuring Your Wishes: A Guide to Your Will
- Looking Beyond: Extending our faith and Christian values beyond our lives

Once again, we say “Thank You.” With God’s help and yours, Austin Grad and his kingdom will advance and bring honor to his name.

Neil Haney—Director of Development
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Our mission is to promote knowledge, understanding, and practice of the Christian faith by equipping Christians and churches for service in the kingdom of God.

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CALENDAR 2014

AUGUST 25  NOVEMBER 27-28
Convocation  Thanksgiving Holidays

AUGUST 25  DECEMBER 12
First Day of Classes  Last Day of Classes

SEPTEMBER 1  DECEMBER 15-19
Labor Day Holiday  Finals Week

SEPTEMBER 17  DECEMBER 22
Constitution Day  Winter Break Begins