

SPRING 2017

# UNION NITE

THE UNION UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



## Union Launches Plastination Lab

THE EIGHTH ACTIVE LAB  
IN THE UNITED STATES

## Called out of Comfort

A Love for the Word,  
a Heart for the City

Meet our Alumni  
Award Winners



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## UNIONITE

The Union University Magazine  
Spring 2017 | Volume 68 | Number 1

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Financial Aid 731-661-5015

LifeWay Bookstore 731-668-9492

Switchboard 731-668-1818

University Ministries 731-661-6528

*Unionite* is published by Union University, 1050 Union University Drive, Jackson, TN 38305-3697. Union University is an academic community, affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, equipping persons to think Christianly and serve faithfully in ways consistent with its core values of being excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused, and future-directed. ©2017

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## From the President

What makes Union University distinctive?

We've been discussing that in recent days here at Union. After all, with so many Christian colleges and universities to choose from, why should prospective students choose us among their many options?

Lots of schools have excellent professors, though I have to admit, I think our faculty members here at Union are the best around. Lots of schools boast strong academics. Lots of schools are solidly committed to the authority of Scripture. Lots of schools offer a robust campus life experience. Lots of schools prepare students for success.

But while many schools may be able to check off a couple of those criteria, what makes Union special is that we can unashamedly check "all of the above."

Union University is an institution focusing on academic excellence that is united in its love for Christ, for His Word and for His Church. Our mission is to develop students of character and Christian virtue in service to church and society. We do that by imparting knowledge that transforms the intellect and points students to our ultimate hope in Christ. We share life together in a caring and grace-filled community that nurtures, edifies and challenges students to be bold and relentless in their pursuit of God and His calling for their lives.

The results speak for themselves, and in this issue of the *Unionite*, you'll see just a small picture of the life-changing and world-shaping effects that result from a Union education. From an orphanage in Honduras to churchgoers in Jackson, from cutting edge technology in the sciences to equipping students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Union University is making a difference in the lives of people all over the world.

Will you pray for us as we continue to pursue our mission? Your prayers mean a great deal as we trust the Lord to bless Union University and to sustain us in our work.

*"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8*

Gratefully,

Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver, Ph.D.

### DEPARTMENTS

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## Union trustees OK academic reorganization creating two new schools

Trustees at their April 21 meeting approved an academic reorganization for the university that will create the School of Social Work and the School of Adult and Professional Studies, in addition to changing the names of three other schools.

The McAfee School of Business Administration will become the McAfee School of Business, the School of Pharmacy will become the College of Pharmacy and the College of Education and Human Studies will become the College of Education.

The School of Social Work at Union has been a non-degree-granting school under the umbrella of the College of Education and Human Studies. This reorganization makes the School of Social Work its own degree-granting school.

Likewise, the continuing studies department has been a part of the College of Education and Human Studies, but the reorganization separates it from that college.

As part of the creation of the two new schools, trustees approved the appointment of Mary Anne Poe as the founding dean of the School of Social Work and Beverly Absher as the founding dean of the School of Adult and Professional Studies.



Poe



Absher

"It's encouraging to us to see the growth of these two programs in recent years," said Lisa Rogers, chairman of Union's Board of Trustees. "With the leadership these two deans will provide, we're confident that these two new schools will continue to develop and flourish in the days ahead."

Poe currently serves as associate dean for social work, professor of social work and as director of Union's Center for Just and Caring Communities. Absher is chair of the department of continuing studies, professor of educational leadership and associate vice president for auxiliary operations.

Union President Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver said he was pleased to have these two leaders on the Union campus join the Academic Deans' Council, as they bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and wisdom concerning their respective schools.

"Mary Anne Poe has helped social work thrive at Union through her commitment to ensuring the programs provide excellent academic training with Christ-centered compassion," Oliver said. "Our social work graduates are strong and effective practitioners who are the hands and feet of Christ to many who are hurting and need help."

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## TerKeurst: Resolve for obedience comes from God

Author and speaker Lysa TerKeurst encouraged students, faculty and staff in a Feb. 17 Union University chapel service to resolve to be obedient to God.

"You don't have to strategize and manipulate and try to figure out the battle you're facing right now," she said. "Honestly, your job is just to be obedient to God. God's job is everything else."

TerKeurst is the best-selling author of 18 books and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries. She also spoke at a women's conference hosted by Union Feb. 18. More than 1,100 women from 113 churches attended that event.

Stephanie Edge, associate professor of computer science and organizer of the conference, said TerKeurst is an inspiration to many women who have read her books and heard her teaching.

"As president of Proverbs 31 Ministries, Lysa and her staff are passionate about teaching the Word of God in ways that get people excited to live the Bible out loud," Edge said. ☛



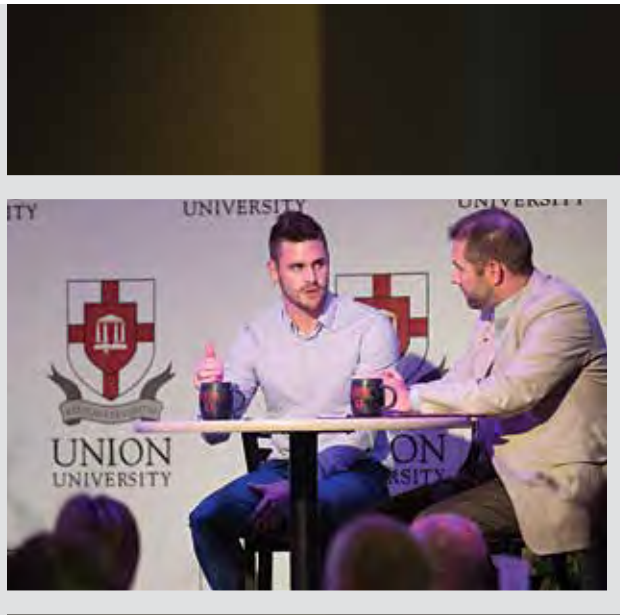
## Olympic champion Boudia speaks at Union Auxiliary event

After a lifetime spent in pursuit of his own glory, Olympic gold medalist David Boudia only found peace and contentment in surrendering his life to Christ.

"Out of our pride and our ignorance we try to build our lives without a creator that can supply everything to us," Boudia said April 18 at Union University. "I began to see that this wasn't all about me. ... I was to fulfill my purpose of being a visible representation of an invisible God."

Boudia was the keynote speaker at "Greater than Gold: An Evening with David Boudia," a dinner hosted by the Union University Auxiliary in the Carl Grant Events Center. Earlier in the day, Boudia signed copies of his book, *Greater than Gold: From Olympic Heartbreak to Ultimate Redemption* at the LifeWay Christian Store on the Union campus.

A three-time Olympic diver, Boudia won a gold medal in the 2012 Olympics in London in the men's 10-meter platform event. 🏊



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Oliver said Absher seems to succeed at everything she attempts through a combination of professional excellence and personal will.

"Her assistance as we developed our current strategic plan is but one example of her institutional leadership," Oliver said. "The School of Adult and Professional Studies is an important part of our mission. There are numerous adults who have some college credits but lack a degree. Beverly has developed an outstanding academic program that integrates faith throughout the curriculum and helps people achieve their higher education goals."



### New biology master's degree to begin in fall 2017

Union University's biology department will begin offering a one-year Master of Science in Biology degree in the fall of 2017, transitioning from the current graduate certificate in pre-professional biology.

"We have a number of applicants already, and we're hopeful it continues to grow," said Marc Lockett, associate professor of biology and director of graduate programs in biology. "When we initially began, our thought was that our undergrads here on campus would be the majority, and we certainly still welcome them to apply. The reality, though, has been folks off campus showing interest in the program."

The degree requires 30 credit hours, 13 in the fall and spring and four in January. Students will attend lectures and labs with undergraduate students and also take on additional work and projects, including separate exams. Master's students will also work with a faculty mentor to complete a year-long non-thesis project.

The master's program will be limited to eight graduate students.

The program will offer two tracks: pre-professional and general biology. The pre-professional track is designed for students seeking to be better prepared for their particular health-related professional program. The general biology track is a broader, more customized program for students seeking to further their education or career opportunities through advanced training in biology.

For more information, visit [uu.edu/msbio](http://uu.edu/msbio).



## Garrett named dean of McAfee School of Business

Jason Garrett, formerly the associate dean of the Foster College of Business at Bradley University, became dean of Union University's McAfee School of Business in January.

Garrett succeeds Keith Absher, who died in 2015 after serving as dean for more than a decade. Bill Nance served as acting dean in the interim.

"I am honored to be selected to serve with the excellent faculty, staff and students of the McAfee School of Business," Garrett said. "There is no other School of Business I would prefer to join."

Garrett earned his bachelor's degree

at Oklahoma Baptist University in 1994 under the presidency of longtime Union professor and administrator Bob Agee, who Garrett said is one of his most significant life mentors.

He completed his master's degree in business administration at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and his Doctor of Philosophy degree in marketing from the University of Missouri's Trulaske College of Business.

Garrett and his wife Kelli, who graduated from Southwest Baptist University, have three children—Lydia, 8; Silas, 6; and Priscilla, 4. 📧



### Scripture reading marathon draws 500 volunteers

Despite bouts of drenching rain and forceful winds, the Scripture reading marathon at Union University went on as scheduled.

About 500 volunteers from Union and the broader Jackson and West Tennessee communities participated in a five-day public reading of the Bible from start to finish. The event was designed as a kickoff and wrap-up of sorts for REF500, a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, from March 9-11 on the Union campus.

Each of the volunteers read for 10 minutes in a tent set up under Miller Tower. Ray Van Neste, director of the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, said the marathon was an appropriate way to bookend the Reformation celebration, since the Scriptures played such a crucial role in that revival.

"I'm telling people, 'There may not be anybody

there when you get there. You just read,'" Van Neste said. "Scripture itself has its own power."

Van Neste said while a large portion of the volunteers were Union faculty, staff and students, many people from the community volunteered, from children to retirees and every age in between, from a variety of denominations.

### Debate team wins season, championship tournament titles

The Union University Debate Team won the International Public Debate Association Season-Long Championship for the fourth consecutive year. The team also won the IPDA Championship Tournament at the end of the season.

Jacob Collins took the individual championship in the novice category at the IPDA Championships Tournament, while Jacob Mathis, Clark Hubbard and Ryan Sinni were the top speakers in their divisions. For the season, Hubbard won the junior varsity individual sweepstakes.

Web Drake, associate professor of communication arts, is the debate team coach.



### BSOL class helps Boys and Girls Club

Twelve members of Union University's Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership cohort class met at the Boys and Girls Club of Jackson March 11 to repaint the walls of the Learning Center.

As a part of the class, the students were told that they needed to do a service project. After discussing a few ideas, they decided to ask the Boys and Girls Club what projects needed to be done.

The project particularly struck home for Elijah Shelton, who started in the BSOL program in 2015 in addition to working as resource director for the organization.

The Boys and Girls Club provides after-school care, activities and tutoring for students from kindergarten to high school. Shelton hopes that changing the walls of the Learning Center, which

## REF500 festival celebrates Protestant Reformation's 500th anniversary

Union University celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with the REF500 festival March 9-11. The festival included lectures, music, theater, film, sermons and a public reading of the entire Bible.

Ray Van Neste, professor and director of the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union and organizer of the event, said the Reformation is something to be remembered, carefully thought about and celebrated.

"I'm convinced that if we look back carefully, we will see forward more clearly," Van Neste said. "Our hope is that as we look back at how God renewed his church at the Reformation we might learn truths to help us today as we seek renewal once again."

Four plenary addresses were given by Timothy George, Carl Trueman, David Lyle Jeffrey and Peter Leithart. Each speaker discussed how the Reformation has shaped the world and highlighted lessons from the Reformation for today.

George said the Reformation was a movement of retrieval for the sake of renewal, retrieving the principles of the New Testament for the spiritual renewal of the church. Trueman discussed the cross-centered theology of Martin Luther that emphasized the necessity of suffering and warned against Christians seeking their own glory.

Jeffrey demonstrated how the Reformation led to a new flourishing of

literature, quoting significant portions of Scripture and classic literature.

Leithart probed the impact of the Reformation on modern culture.

Nathan Finn, dean of Union's School of Theology and Missions, spoke at a chapel service during the festival on the Baptist contribution to the Reformation. He said the earliest Baptists were third-generation Protestants who attempted to reform the Reformation by applying Protestant principles to matters of the local church.

"The goal was to recapture as much of New Testament life as possible... while also holding to the five solas of the reformation," Finn said.

He said Baptists rejected mixed membership, infant baptism, clerical authority over laity and an overly cozy relationship between the church and state.

Finn said Baptists committed themselves to the principle of a regenerate church membership. He said New Testament churches were meant to



be communities of disciples who had been born again and were walking together through this life and into the next life, an idea that had been lost in the Reformation idea of mixed membership. Finn said Baptists should recommit themselves to regenerate church membership.

"I am deeply, deeply grateful for the Reformation and its legacy," Finn said. "But I'm also grateful that my Baptist forebears were willing to reform the Reformation by applying those principles to the life of the church, especially our understanding of church membership."

The REF500 festival also included several parallel sessions led by Union faculty and guests. Video of all addresses is available at [uu.edu/events/ref500](http://uu.edu/events/ref500). A book, published by B&H, was produced from the conference as well: *Reformation 500: How the Greatest Revival Since Pentecost Continues to Shape the World Today*. 📧



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

is where most of the tutoring and mentoring takes place, from blue to yellow and orange will help stimulate the students' minds.

"[The professors] said, 'You guys are going to grow together. And by the time this is done, you are going to be like family.' And I can truly say that they are like my brothers and sisters," he said. "It does my heart good to see that we are all working together."

### Recent publications

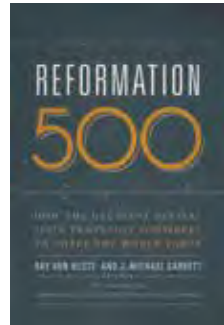
Several Union University professors have written books in recent months in a variety of disciplines.



Jason Crawford, assistant professor of English, is the author of *Allegory and Enchantment: An Early Modern Poetics*, published by Oxford University Press.

Nathan Finn, dean of the School of Theology and Missions, co-edited *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church*, published by IVP Academic.

Ray Van Neste, professor of biblical studies and director of the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, and Mike Garrett, assistant director and librarian for the Ryan Center, co-edited *Reformation 500: How the Greatest Revival Since Pentecost Continues to Shape the World Today*, published by B&H Academic.



Ted Kluck, assistant professor of communication arts, wrote *Upside Down Football: An Inside Look at Long Snapping in the NFL*, published by Rowman and Littlefield, while Richard Addo, professor of pharmaceutical sciences, edited *Ocular Drug Delivery: Advances, Challenges and Applications*, published by Springer.

Union Provost C. Ben Mitchell, who also serves as the Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy, contributed to *Dictionary of Christianity and Science: The Definitive Reference for the Intersection of Christian Faith and Contemporary Science*, published by Zondervan. Mitchell wrote the entries in the dictionary for "genetic enhancement," "life," "morality," "person," "sentience" and "technology."

All books written by Union personnel are listed at [uu.edu/books](http://uu.edu/books).

Keep up with the latest news from Union at [uu.edu/news](http://uu.edu/news)



## 13 students participate in March for Life

Thirteen Union University students took part in the annual March for Life, a peaceful pro-life demonstration, in Washington, D.C., in January.

The students are members of Life139, Union's pro-life student group. They also participated in the Evangelicals for Life and Students for Life conferences while in D.C.

"Abortion is the greatest human rights issue of our generation," said Andrew Edmiston, a junior physics major and president of Life139. "It affects all races, all people. It's the human life at its most innocent stage."

C. Ben Mitchell, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Union, was part of a panel on pro-life issues at the Evangelicals for Life conference. He said as a Christ-centered, people-focused institution, Union is invested in life issues.

"God has made every human being in his image and likeness," Mitchell said. "We have a moral duty to respect and protect people from womb to tomb. That our students see this as such an important event is a great encouragement to all of us."



## Gaines at evangelism rally: Talk about Jesus at every opportunity

Steve Gaines, pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said evangelism should be the priority of every Christian.

"Heaven and hell are looming in the balance, and that's a lot more important than anything else," Gaines said March 5

at the West Tennessee Evangelism Rally at Union University.

Gaines was the featured preacher at the rally, sponsored by Union and the Tennessee Baptist Convention. He spoke to pastors and church members from churches across the West Tennessee area.

The West Tennessee Evangelism Rally

also included several breakout sessions on various aspects of evangelism. The topics included evangelism in the workplace, leading children to Christ, getting the gospel to Muslims and building evangelistic church ministries. ■



**Web exclusive:** Video from the rally is available at [uu.edu/events/wter](http://uu.edu/events/wter)



### Rumsfeld stresses importance of participation in government at Scholarship Banquet address

U.S. citizens have a responsibility to make the nation what they want it to be, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said Oct. 4 at Union University's 19th annual Scholarship Banquet.

"The United States of America is not a driverless Uber car," Rumsfeld said. "It is a country that has been great and will be great only to the extent each of us engages, participates, supports people in public office, criticizes those who earn criticism, supports those who earn support."

"If we want to know about our future and what it's going to be like, all we need to do is look in the mirror."

Rumsfeld, who served as secretary of defense under President Gerald R. Ford and President George W. Bush, was the keynote speaker for the annual event at the Carl Perkins Civic Center. The Scholarship Banquet raises money for student scholarships each year and celebrates the generosity of donors who help make a Union education possible for students.

### Dauer named director of Union University Hendersonville

Renee Dauer was named campus director at Union University Hendersonville.

Dauer has been director of continuing studies and assistant professor in organizational leadership at Union University's Hendersonville campus since May 2010. She will continue to oversee adult and professional programs in addition to her role as campus director.

"At Union University Hendersonville, we have an outstanding group of faculty and staff members who provide Christ-centered, excellent education to our students," Dauer said. "I look forward to leading our campus to meet the educational and professional development needs of our community." ■



## School of Education scores high on state report card

Union University's School of Education has been ranked in the highest possible category on the Tennessee State Board of Education's 2016 report card on the effectiveness of teacher training programs.

Dottie Myatt, assistant dean for teacher education and accreditation at Union, said the report card is designed to give accountability to educator preparation programs and supply information they can use to improve effectiveness.

"We have to be accountable for the educators we put out into the classrooms," Myatt said. "They are a reflection of our program."

Union's program received an overall performance score of four, the highest possible. It also received a four in the provider impact category, which assesses the effectiveness of educators



trained at Union. The category includes teacher observation scores as well as student growth assessments. Union received 96.5 percent of all possible points in this category. ■



# Patterson gives inaugural Dockery Lectures on Baptist Thought and Heritage

Jim Patterson, university professor of Christian thought and tradition and associate dean for the School of Theology and Missions, delivered the inaugural Dockery Lectures on Baptist Thought and Heritage March 14.

The lecture series, named for former Union President David S. Dockery and First Lady Lanese Dockery, will be an annual event designed to examine the importance of the Baptist heritage, the distinctives of Baptist thought and the influence of the Christian intellectual tradition.

Baptists need ecclesiological consistency that is rooted in Scripture, doctrine and the best traditions from our past.

Patterson gave two lectures for the inaugural event, the first entitled “The Baptist Ecclesiological Legacy: Some Problematic Traditions.” In his address, Patterson cited individualism and pragmatism as two problem-causing issues for Baptists.



“Baptists need ecclesiological consistency that is rooted in Scripture, doctrine and the best traditions from our past,” Patterson said. “Weak or compromised ecclesiology is one of the most notable failures of contemporary Baptist thought.”

Patterson said individualism, which is more of a problem among left-leaning Baptists, and pragmatism, which is

more frequent on the right, “lure us into thinking that either the time-tested distinctives do not really matter or that we are simply being relevant to the times.

“In the final analysis, however, because our churches play such a vital role in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, a flawed or tainted ecclesiology will obstruct the effective proclamation of the gospel.”

## DO YOU KNOW A FUTURE BULLDOG?

TRE THARPE, '17  
social work, Paris, Tennessee

As alumni and friends of Union University, you know better than anyone the type of students who belong at Union. We're looking for the next generation who will thrive in an atmosphere of Christ-centered academic excellence and a close-knit learning community.

You play an essential role in helping us meet these prospective Bulldogs. We invite you to take a few moments to send us contact information for a high school student who would be a great fit for Union. We'll take the next step.

CALL 800.33.UNION OR VISIT [uu.edu/suggest](http://uu.edu/suggest)



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# UNION LAUNCHES EIGHTH PLASTINATION LAB IN THE UNITED STATES

BY TIM ELLSWORTH ('96)

For more than a decade, Union science and nursing students have benefited from their study of human anatomy thanks to a cadaver lab and the generosity of donors who have bequeathed their bodies to Union for scientific study.

Now, Union students can take advantage of a new development—a plastination lab.

Union recently opened only the eighth active plastination lab in the country, according to Tony Wamble, director of the plastination lab, director of anatomical services and instructor of nursing. The lab opened in January in Providence Hall, and it functions by turning real human and animal organs into plastic, thus preserving tissue.

The process was developed in Germany in 1978 and is more prevalent worldwide than it is in the United States, Wamble says. Many other countries don't have the legal restrictions that exist in the United States, so it's easier for the process to be commercialized and profitable.

"The process is time consuming, and patience is required," Wamble says. "It takes approximately six months to see any results. Few younger professors have been trained to take over the existing labs, and therefore, some of the labs in the U.S. have become inactive."

Students in Union's Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist and pharmacy programs do full cadaver dissections each year, a process that takes about 60 hours. As they dissect the cadaver, students discuss pathology and discover diseased

organs. Those organs are then harvested (with permission) and preserved in formaldehyde for future teaching purposes.

Even in formaldehyde, however, the organs deteriorate over time. Also, so students are not directly exposed to formaldehyde as they handle the organs, the specimens must go through a time-consuming water bath process prior to the class.

The plastination process works by removing the water from cells and replacing it with acetone. After that, the organ is placed in pure liquid silicone under a vacuum, which causes the acetone to bubble out of the cells and allows the silicone to be sucked into them. The process, which takes about six months from start to finish, results in organs that are not plastic-coated, but are 100 percent plastic throughout.

The plastinated specimens can then be used as models and teaching tools in any field that requires gross anatomical studies. They can also be used for comparing anatomy to CT or MRI imaging. The finished specimens are durable, odor free and anatomically intact.

"One of the great things about plastination is it allows me as a professor to remove artificial barriers to learning," says Brian Foster, assistant professor of nursing, who has worked with Wamble on creation of the plastination lab. "If you take the 'ick' factor away from dealing with cadavers, this allows students to learn more effectively."



IF YOU TAKE THE 'ICK' FACTOR AWAY FROM DEALING WITH CADAVERS, THIS ALLOWS STUDENTS TO LEARN MORE EFFECTIVELY.



Wamble says the university's current donor list of anatomical bequests is about 100 people. Union takes those donations seriously, Wamble says, because the human body is God's creation. The development of the plastination lab will not change how the university handles those donations.

"It's a very special gift that they give," he says. "We make sure that we're handling them with dignity and respect."

Wamble spent several months raising funds to begin the plastination lab. Now that it has officially launched, he's moving onto the next phase of the project—raising enough money to open a museum that would present and display some of the plastinated specimens so area grade school and high school students could learn from Union's efforts as well.

Donations to the museum project can be made by contacting Wamble at [rwamble@uu.edu](mailto:rwamble@uu.edu) or by contacting the university's Institutional Advancement office at (731) 661-5050.

Wamble says the plastination lab is another example of the excellent education students can get at Union.

"There's no other nursing school that can compete with us or with our School of Pharmacy or Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist program when you're talking about the cadaver lab, because that sets us apart already," he says. "The plastination lab expands upon that and takes the excellence here to another level." 📌



(L TO R) Tony Wamble and Brian Foster





# LEARNING TO GO

UNION STUDENTS LEARN AND SERVE  
WITH TAMPA CHURCH PLANT

BY NATHAN HANDLEY ('15)



As Daniel Regan looked around the small sanctuary in Tampa, Florida, he saw people who were fully committed to Christ, the gospel and the local church.

Regan and seven other Union University students had spent their spring break working in Tampa with members of Covenant Life Church. They had started the week at the church's Sunday morning service, and they were concluding it by gathering to remember Good Friday.



Between those services, Regan worked alongside church members in ministering to the homeless, caring for children, landscaping and prayer walking. He observed how they interacted with each other and with their community. As he watched, he began to think about his own role within the local church in Tennessee.

Bakeer says Tampa is a dark city, and Covenant Life clearly has a desire to see Tampa flourish spiritually. That's a desire he wants to cultivate within himself as he prepares for the next stage of his life. He says he saw the importance of prayer as the team prepared to work. He says God prepared the hearts and minds of the team to be open to the work that was being done.

She says traveling with a team helped build her confidence and gave her encouragement through difficult and uncomfortable encounters.

"You knew the whole time that your team was in the same place you were," she says. "They were just as nervous."

Shea says after seeing the needs in Tampa, specifically the needs of the



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"I had this understanding that full-time ministry was a higher calling," Regan says. "But in ministering and interacting with the people at Covenant Life, I really gained a better understanding of how the body of Christ is made up primarily of people who have another day job."

Regan, a senior accounting major at Union, and his GO Trip teammates worked with Union alumnus Justin Perry, one of the pastors of Covenant Life Church, a church plant in south Tampa.

Perry says his goal for the week was to see the team grow in their love for God, for each other, for the city of Tampa and for the local church. Regan says that goal was accomplished.

Joey Bakeer, a senior cell and molecular biology major and another member of the Tampa team, says he also learned by watching the members of Covenant Life Church.

"Their faith isn't just about themselves, but it affects the church, it affects the family, and it affects the city that they're in, the city of Tampa," Bakeer says. "Each decision they made was affected by their Christian faith."

"We were not only praying alone, we were praying together in pairs and as an entire team," Bakeer says. "We were all praying together for the work that would be done. There wasn't just a work done in Tampa in the church and the people there. There was a work done in us as a team."

Hannah Shea, a junior biology major, says the time spent in prayer and training was vital to her experience in Tampa. She says she wanted to grow in confidence in sharing her faith, and she saw that happen throughout the training process.

"We practiced talking to people and having spiritual conversations before we went, and we prayed together about it before," Shea says. "I definitely saw my boldness in my faith grow through the process."

Shea spent her time in Tampa knocking on the doors of strangers' houses, serving food to the urban poor and surveying college students at the University of Tampa. She says the more she was pushed out of her comfort zone, the more she saw God work through conversations and interactions.

homeless, she has a greater desire to find the needs in her own city. She says she wants to continue putting herself in uncomfortable conversations in Jackson.

In addition to the Tampa team, Union sent out 46 other students on GO Trips designed to provide team-based opportunities to serve regionally, domestically and internationally. The teams served in Boston; Connecticut; Louisville, Kentucky; and Honduras. In the summer, 17 more students will go on trips to Salt Lake City, Ethiopia and East Asia.

Regan says the GO Trip gave him an avenue to share the gospel over spring break, but more importantly, it prepared him to share the gospel for the rest of his life and made him excited about how he can serve the local church.

"The GO Trip training isn't just to prepare us to go on a mission trip," he says. "It's to prepare us to go for the rest of our lives." ■



# GIVING STUDENTS AN EDGE ON LIFE

Union University welcomed the first cohort of students into the Union EDGE program in August 2015. In May 2017, that first cohort walked across the stage at spring commencement.

Jennifer Graves, director of the EDGE program, says the program exists to give students with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity

to have a college experience. The students live and work on campus alongside students in traditional programs.

“We work with students in four areas—life skills, employment skills, social skills and their relationship with Christ—to give them an edge on life,” Graves says.

After completing two years in the program, students receive a certificate of completion. Seth Ratliff was one of the first students to receive the certificate.

Ratliff says the EDGE program allowed him to have the college experience he

They offer to give them rides. They treat our students just like everyone else, and that’s what they need.”

Each first-year student also does two on-campus internships. Students have worked in most campus offices in many different kinds of jobs. In his first year, Ratliff worked for Information Technology and the Wellness Center at Union. In his second year, he worked at Academy Sports and Outdoor in Jackson.

“I clean things and talk to customers and ask them if they need help,” Ratliff says. “I like having a real job.”

In addition to his employment skills, Ratliff has learned many life skills through the EDGE program. He has had lessons on cooking, shopping, doing laundry, answering phones and taking messages. He has learned how to deal with money, from counting it to making a withdrawal from an ATM. He has also been able to take a personal finance class in Union’s McAfee School of Business. Ratliff says this class was one of his favorites, along with classes on political science, American government and principles of management.

Ratliff says college can be intimidating. He was far from his hometown of Coppell, Texas, and it was difficult to not see his family every day, but he says he learned a lot that he hopes to take into a full-time job when he graduates.

“College is a different experience,” he says. “It’s a whole new life. It takes time to get used to, but my friends have done an amazing job helping me.”

Graves says she is grateful for Union and the way the campus has welcomed EDGE students. She says everyone, from the administration to the faculty to the student body, has shown the love of Christ to the students in the program.

“Every single day when I walk on campus, I see the hand of God,” Graves says. “Our students want the same things every other college student wants. They want to work. They want relationships. And Union is providing that.” 🙏



ABOVE: (L TO R) Taylor Flood, Hannah Espy, Mary Porter, Ethan Wilson, Kelsie Layman, Maria Tatman, Seth Ratliff

always wanted and taught him valuable skills for employment. He says he wanted to attend Union because of his grandparents, who graduated from Union. The EDGE program allowed him to do that.

During his time at Union, Ratliff was part of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. He says his brothers in the fraternity were very accepting and have become good friends.

“I get to hang out with all sorts of people,” Ratliff says. “It’s been a really great experience.”

Graves says the Union community has accepted EDGE students in a remarkable way and helped them integrate into campus life. Each first-year student has five mentors—other students who hang out with them, encourage them and help them when needed.

“We have the best mentors I could ask for,” Graves says. “When they’re doing something, they invite our students along.





# A LOVE for the WORD, a HEART for the CITY

SEVEN JACKSON PASTORS SHARE HOW UNION  
EQUIPPED THEM TO SERVE THE CHURCH FAITHFULLY

BY NATHAN HANDLEY ('15)

**L**EE TANKERSLEY sat at a table at Davis-Kidd Booksellers preparing a sermon.

He was in his first year as pastor at Cornerstone Community Church and his final year as an undergraduate student at Union University. He was overwhelmed with his new responsibilities and discouraged by feelings of discord at the church.

Greg Thornbury, then a professor in Union's School of Theology and Missions, stopped at Tankersley's table, handed him a small pamphlet and told him it would help him in his ministry. The booklet was "9 Marks of a Healthy Church" by Mark Dever.

"This was outside of class, outside of campus, but he knew what I was experiencing and knew how to encourage me," Tankersley says. "It's that kind of thing that makes Union such a special place."

Tankersley has now been pastor at Cornerstone for more than 17 years, and

he says it has been one of the greatest blessings of his life. Though he faced many difficulties entering the pastorate at age 21, he says the blessings have far outweighed the struggles.

"As a pastor I get to see things happen behind closed doors that not everyone is aware of," Tankersley says. "I've seen marriages that were about to end that have persevered, persevering in obedience, growing in love for the gospel, conversions, all those things and more."

Tankersley is one of many lead pastors at Jackson churches who graduated from Union. He says he has seen Jackson churches move toward a healthier place under the leadership of these men.

"There are at least a handful of churches if not more that if my child were to come to Jackson, I would be happy for him to join," Tankersley said. "Churches where the membership loves the gospel and the leaders exposit the Scripture."



BACK ROW: (L TO R) Lee Tankersley, Jonathan Baine, Justin Wainscott, William Watson, Grant Gaines. FRONT ROW: Russ Pfisterer, Andy Neely





ABOVE: Lee Tankersley officiates a wedding for a church member. RIGHT: Russ Pflasterer leads worship in Union's chapel April 2015.



ABOVE: Justin Wainscott introduces the speaker at the West Tennessee Pastors and Wives Banquet in the Carl Grant Events Center September 2015.



Wainscott, Watson and Pflasterer enjoy fellowship inside Modero Café in The Logos building on Union's campus.

I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY REDEPTIVE ABOUT SOUTHERN BAPTISTS WORKING TOWARD RACIAL RECONCILIATION AND LETTING GOD CHANGE US FROM THE INSIDE.

—RUSS PFLASTERER

**JUSTIN WAINSCOTT**, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, says he sees Union's impact on Jackson every day. He says the university's dedication to the authority of Scripture and emphasis on excellent teaching has had a positive impact on Jackson churches, moving them from unhealthy institutions to growing, active bodies.

"There is a very high view of the Word and the authority of the Word as it is preached and taught," Wainscott says. "Flowing out of that is an emphasis on the Great Commission, on living out your faith and understanding that Christianity is not just a private religion."

Wainscott graduated from Union in 2002 and also served as pastor at Pleasant Plains Baptist Church in Jackson. He says over the past 10 years, he has seen an increase in churches serving together rather than being in competition with each other.

**ANDY NEELY**, pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church, says this comes from a

clearer understanding of God's kingdom.

"I've seen our church as well as other churches realize that we're not just here to build bigger buildings or build our own individual kingdoms," Neely says. "It's all about the kingdom of God. Sometimes you have to open your hands a little bit to not think everything's about you."

Neely graduated from Union in 1995. He says pastoring a church like West Jackson, with its extensive history and impact on the city, provides a unique set of challenges. He says West Jackson planted a lot of the churches in the area and has a long history with Union and the Jackson community. Along with that blessing comes some baggage.

"The challenge is to embrace that legacy and understand all that God has done here but also lead in a way where we can continue to be effective in the future," Neely says. "We can rejoice in what has been done here in the past, but we have to continue that work today."

**RUSS PFLASTERER**, pastor of City Fellowship Baptist Church in downtown Jackson, has had opposite struggles. Pflasterer helped build City Fellowship from the ground up in 2007, and he says each year the church grows, he realizes more how much goes into running a church.

"We ask a lot of a pastor," he says. "We ask him to be an administrator, a teacher, a counselor. There's a need for strong theology and biblical understanding, but they also need organizational leadership skills."

City Fellowship has grown over the last nine years and has an increasingly diverse membership. Pflasterer says his desire for ministry was born after seeing the racial divide in Jackson. He graduated from Union in 1995 with an art degree and taught art in the Jackson-Madison County School System for 15 years before becoming a pastor. During that time, he says he saw the schools re-segregate.

"We asked God from the beginning to let this church be a place of racial diversity," Pflasterer says. "Racial issues are such a foothold for the devil in this community, we wanted to face that reality head-on."

Pflasterer says he struggled initially with whether a Southern Baptist church could be a place that fostered racial diversity. He said the denomination's history with slavery and racial tensions seemed like a barrier at first, but he came to recognize it as an opportunity for God to be glorified.

"I think there's something really redemptive about Southern Baptists working toward racial reconciliation and letting God change us from the inside," he says. "Things don't have to be the way they were."

Wainscott says while First Baptist has made steps toward racial reconciliation, there is still much room for growth. He says he would like to see churches take a more active role in pursuing and fostering racial reconciliation.

"You can see evidences of reaching out to brothers and sisters of other

ethnicities, and that's something to rejoice in," Wainscott says. "But you can see we've got a long way to go. There's so much need for healing."

One of the ways Wainscott has seen that healing play out is in his relationship with **WILLIAM WATSON**, pastor of Historic First Baptist Church in Jackson. Watson met Wainscott through a phone call in 2011, when First Baptist was celebrating an anniversary. They wanted to include their brothers and sisters at Historic First Baptist in the celebration.

"In a way, we are sister churches, connected by way of the Emancipation Proclamation," Watson says. "The families who started this First Baptist were the slaves of those who were at First Baptist North Highland."

Watson says he and Wainscott have continued to partner in ministry and share each other's pulpits regularly. He says finding the time to be intentional about developing the relationship between the churches is difficult, but it is vital to the health of the churches and of Jackson.

"A healthy city is predicated on the churches being healthy and continuing to

be intentional about crossing those lines," Watson says. "We're still not crossing lines as much as we should."

Watson says churches must continue to work on both strengths and weaknesses and place the gospel at the center of the conversation. He says the gospel speaks to all cultures, generations and contexts.

"If anything is going to change, it has to be changed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which crosses all barriers and all lines, which changes hearts and minds," he says.

Each of these men studied at Union University, and they all say Union has had an incalculable impact on their ministries. Nathan Finn, dean of Union's School of Theology and Missions, says healthy institutions and healthy churches reinforce the growth of each other.

"Often you find that when a university becomes spiritually and theologically and missionally healthier, that has a positive influence on churches around the university," Finn says. "Then as those churches become healthier, they reinforce what's happening at the institution, and they help keep that institution focused so that it doesn't begin to drift."



Finn says churches in Jackson are eager to invest in students, providing internship opportunities and giving them responsibilities as church members. He says Union wants to have close relationships with local churches and come alongside them in equipping students spiritually.

“While we have chapel, and we have discipleship groups, we know that ground zero is the local church,” he says. “Institutions come and go, but it’s the church that endures until Christ returns.”

**GRANT GAINES**, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, graduated from Union in 2005. He says he sees the benefits of Union through the students who worship

at Calvary. He says Union students see the importance of the local church and are serious about church membership. This places a large responsibility on the church to teach and train the students in the short time they are in Jackson.

“Our goal for college ministry is to not make it youth group part two,” Gaines said. “Instead, we treat you like anyone else in the church, and hopefully your time here at Calvary teaches you how to be a good, faithful church member so that we can launch you out into whatever city you end up in to be a blessing to a local church there.”

Tankersley says he sees Cornerstone as a hub and a launching pad, and this is

made possible by the students at Union.

“Because people come from everywhere to Union and into our churches, then we can affect the world,” he says.

He says the church must be about the work of training, equipping and sending out individuals to take the gospel and what they’ve learned all over the country in the cities where they work and live. He says Union students have a passion for the needs of the world and want to do ministry, even if they are not in the School of Theology and Missions.

Neely says his time at Union was pivotal not only for his biblical training, but also his individual spiritual growth. He says his fellow students were

EVERY WEEK WHEN I DO SERMON PREPARATION, IT’S THE FRUIT OF THE SEEDS THAT WERE SOWN AT UNION UNIVERSITY.

—GRANT GAINES



ABOVE: Neely, Gaines, Baine and Tankersley fellowship together. RIGHT: William Watson speaks in Union’s chapel March 2017.



passionate about their faith and showed it in how they lived.

“I’d never really been in an environment with other young men who were living out their faith and loved the Lord,” Neely says. “I had other guys who were sharpening me.”

Neely says his professors lived out their faith as well. They taught Scripture and continually pointed their students to Scripture, but they also lived as examples of what Scripture teaches. They spent extra time on campus and opened their homes to students.

“Professors knew who their students were and that they were people and not just bodies in a classroom,” Neely says.

Gaines says Union’s Christian studies program gave him a solid foundation for his seminary education and an immense respect for the authority of Scripture.

“Every week when I do sermon preparation, it’s the fruit of the seeds that were sown at Union University,” Gaines says.

**JONATHAN BAINE** graduated from Union in 2002. He serves bi-vocationally as pastor of Pleasant Plains Baptist Church. He says Union taught him to let the Word of God be his theme in everything he does, whether he is pastoring a church or working elsewhere. He says professors at Union taught him to be a scholar of the Bible.

“We love God by loving his Word,” Baine says. “To be an effective pastor, a pastor must be a theologian. He must be a man who loves the Word.”

Baine works most weekdays in schools, providing character-based training for students. He says serving bi-vocationally has its own set of challenges, but it has taught him not to look at the church

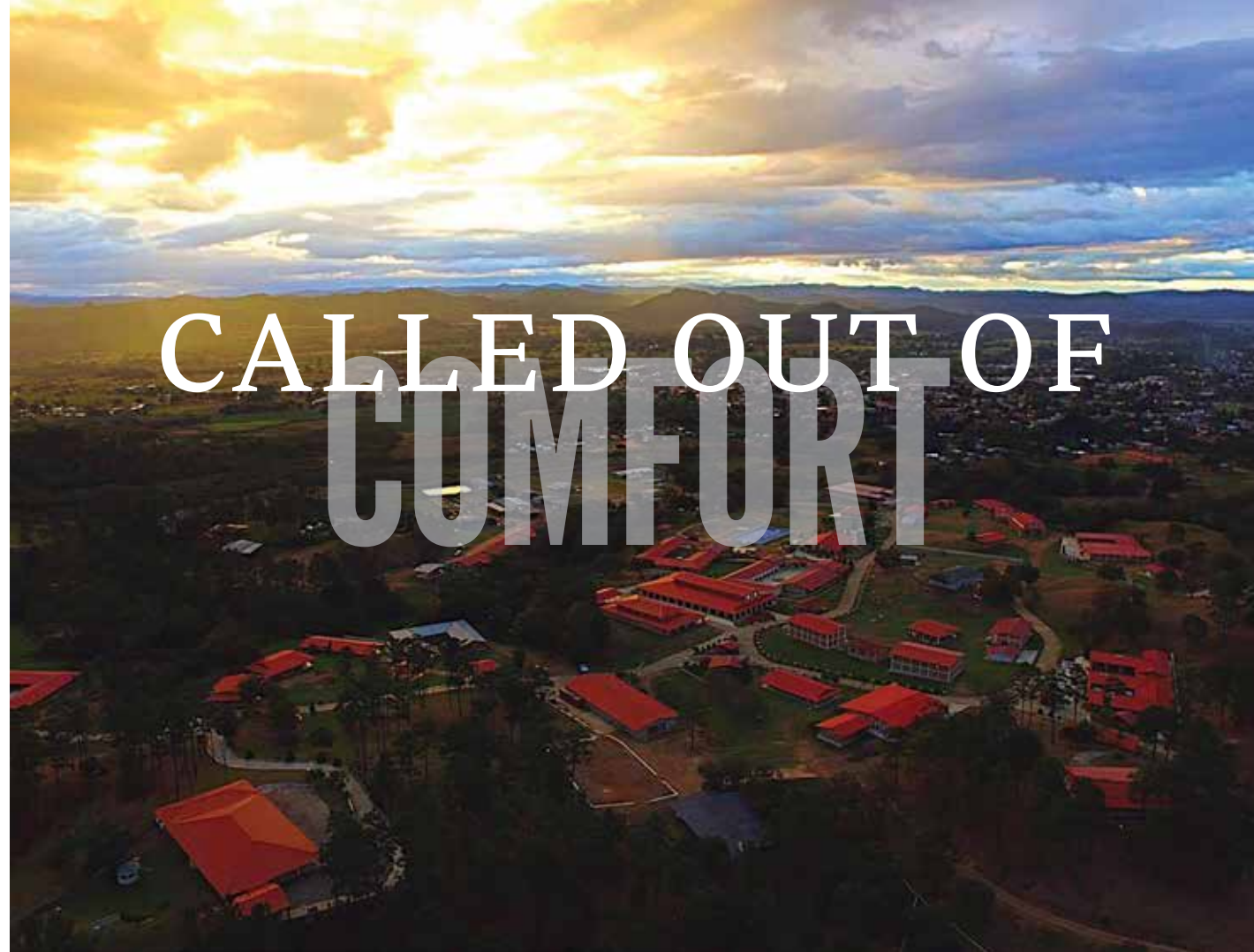
like he would a job or career. He says the membership of Pleasant Plains serves him as much as he serves them, supporting the mission of the church in prayer and volunteer ministry.

“God has revealed his grace by being faithful over my time,” Baine says.

Watson is currently a Christian studies student at Union. He says he came to know Union through his relationships with Wainscott and Pflasterer, and he has learned much through the relationships he has made in the School of Theology and Missions. He says his professors serve as mentors, teaching him to better exposit the Bible.

“They’ve taught me to let the text speak for itself,” Watson says. “Not to add to it or take away from it but to present it as it is.” ☞





# CALLED OUT OF COMFORT

## ENGINEERING ALUMNUS LEAVES STATESIDE EMPLOYMENT FOR HONDURAN ORPHANAGE MINISTRY

BY NATHAN HANDLEY ('15)

In August 2016, Cody Giles boarded a plane bound for Honduras. He was headed to Orphanage Emmanuel, a place he had visited several times before.

But this time it wasn't a visit. A month prior, Cody had quit a lucrative engineering job in Tennessee, and he was going to volunteer full-time at the orphanage with the estimate that his savings should allow him to live there for a year without pay.

Cody had visited Orphanage Emmanuel three times before, the first time as part of one of Union University's GO Trips. He says the orphanage never left his mind when he was back in the states. He had met children whose pasts seemed

irredeemable and had seen God at work through the orphanage, and he wondered how he could reconcile a frivolous life in the United States with what he had seen in Honduras.

"God was stirring a desire for something more in me," Cody says.

Cody's life in America was everything any 24-year-old could have asked for. He had a well-paying job, had maxed out his Roth IRA, and had put away 10 percent of his earnings into his 401k. He saved money and paid off all his student loan debt while still being able to live comfortably. He even invested in property, which he still rents out to tenants.

"I had all the best friends I could ask for," Cody says. "I never felt lonely. I was eaten up with working out and bodybuilding. But the Holy Spirit made me uncomfortable with my state of life in America."

Through time with God and experiences with different people, places and circumstances, Cody says God showed him that none of what he had been pursuing mattered. The American Dream began to seem like a big lie because it left him empty.

"Are we supposed to just go to school, work our whole lives, retire and then just live comfortably until we die?" Cody asks. "Heck no."

Cody says he began to realize that everything he was doing was an attempt

Cody first visited Orphanage Emmanuel a year and half earlier, in the spring of 2014. He was one of many Union students who used their spring and summer breaks to minister on GO Trips around the world.

Cody says he first saw the name "Orphanage Emmanuel" on a small sheet of paper in the hallway of the Student Union Building at Union at the beginning of his senior year. He had been considering participating in a GO Trip, and as he prayed about the various opportunities, the Honduras trip quickly rose to the top.

"It's funny how God can take me grabbing a little slip of paper from a GO Trip table and turn it into me quitting my

what Cody expected from an orphanage.

"It seemed more like a summer camp," Cody says. "Nobody was hurting, crying, sick or hungry. They had a hospital there, a dentist, beds of their own, three meals a day, a school, Bible studies, a church and the list goes on. Everything seemed perfect."

On that first trip, Cody spent most of his time doing manual projects around the orphanage—harvesting tilapia and laying concrete for a greenhouse. He became close with many of his fellow Union students, and many of those friendships remained with him once he returned to the states. But so did Orphanage Emmanuel.

Cody returned to Honduras twice after that trip, once the following summer and



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to fill himself, and none of it was working. He realized he wouldn't be filled until he began truly living for Jesus.

"I literally looked up to heaven and said, 'OK, Lord,'" Cody says. "And I felt the anxiety of 'Am I doing what I should be?' melt away. I finally felt like I was actually using my life for something that was worthwhile, something that would grow me in ways I never thought possible, and something that honored my Jesus who died for me."

That's when Cody began to make plans to move to Honduras. God had never allowed Orphanage Emmanuel to leave his mind, and he knew it was where he needed to be.

comfortable, well-paying job in America with all my friends and hobbies and moving to an orphanage," Cody says.

"That's what Jesus does to people though, and it's pretty cool."

The first things Cody noticed in Honduras were the differences from the United States. The food was strange, water was sold in bags at gas stations, and simply riding in a car was exciting as the drivers paid little attention to traffic laws, coming inches from each other yet never wrecking.

But Orphanage Emmanuel was more familiar. Its lawns were well-maintained, and its buildings were newer, a stark contrast to most of the city and not at all

once in January 2015, after graduating with his bachelor's degree in engineering. It was on these subsequent trips that he got to know the kids, and he saw that behind the well-kept grass, brick buildings and happy faces were children in great need. All of the more than 450 kids at the orphanage had lost their parents in some way, and many had other terrible experiences in their pasts. Even though they lived relatively well, they had needs beyond food, clothing and shelter.

"You can't give people everything they need and expect them to be fine and perfectly happy," Cody says. "Three warm meals a day, a dentist and a bed to sleep in doesn't wipe away the past."



Cody remembers an evening where he asked one of his Honduran friends a simple question about how he grew up—a question that would seem innocent enough to most people in the United States. But his friend's eyes immediately filled with tears as he muttered, "I don't really feel ready to talk about that, man."

"That's why I'm here," Cody says. "The look in these kids' eyes stays with me."

A few months after moving to Honduras, Cody had already put his engineering knowledge to use. He built an Excel sheet for cost/benefit analysis of the orphanage's dairy cows and created concrete septic



clean-out boxes. He was able to teach other volunteers and employees how to fix things and do things in the most efficient ways. He says the thing he values most from his engineering education is the ability to think critically and solve problems.

"I have all this knowledge floating around in my head about electromagnetism and thermodynamics," he says. "But it's the practical, street smart, common sense, figure-it-out knowledge that I took away from being at Union that has helped me most."

Wade McCollum, executive director of Orphanage Emmanuel, says as the orphanage continues to grow, so do its challenges, and the challenges are not limited to engineering. He says Cody and other volunteers have helped in agriculture, nursing, human development, general maintenance, education and vocational training.

"Volunteers help to fulfill responsibilities in these areas to benefit the children of Orphanage Emmanuel and themselves as well," McCollum says. "In

my opinion, anyone who wishes to help other people while making themselves more aware of the world around them should serve somewhere in short-term missions, preferably overseas."

Cody says his priority at the orphanage was always the relationships. He says he can hardly count the lessons the orphanage and the people there taught him. They showed him how real Jesus was on earth and is now. They reinforced the importance of loving others more than himself. They taught him to be happy in tiring and hard situations and to live with people he

THERE'S ONE THING  
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doesn't necessarily get along with.

But Cody says the most significant thing he learned was to enjoy each day that God has given him – to not look ahead to a weekend or vacation and not turn back to dwell in the past.

"God is a today God," Cody says. "He knows our past and future, but in his full and perfect love he loves us today in this day."

In February 2017, Cody returned to the United States. His stay in Honduras was shorter than he anticipated, but he says his relationship with the orphanage isn't over. He hopes to return there soon, and he wants to work with other orphanages as well.

"For now, I'm back in America," Cody says. "But I can't go back to my comfortable American life. I know that's not what God has called me to."

Cody says this is where he has found peace. He doesn't know when he will return to Honduras or what he will do next, but he knows what he is supposed to do in the meantime.

"There's one thing I know," he says. "As long as I'm living for Jesus today, he will carry me the rest of the way." 📖

20 years  
of partnership with  
ORPHANAGE  
EMMANUEL

This year marks the 20th year of Union University's partnership with Orphanage Emmanuel in Honduras.

Todd Brady, Union's vice president for university ministries, visited the 900-acre orphanage site for the first time in 1997 while he was serving as campus minister. He was looking for ways to mobilize students for missions, and the newly established orphanage provided a perfect opportunity for that.

"It became a staple of our mobilization program," Brady says. "A great trip to take students who had never been overseas before."

In the first several years of the partnership, teams of Union students worked on building projects, pouring a lot of concrete and doing manual construction for the ever-growing orphanage. In recent years, the teams have worked to maintain buildings and build a more efficient infrastructure.

"One of the greatest challenges at Orphanage Emmanuel is the great energy cost," Brady says. "That's why we got our engineering students involved working on projects to help them save money."

In 2016, engineering students designed and installed solar water heaters to cut down on electricity costs. They have also installed solar panels and other devices to help conserve energy on lighting.

Wade McCollum, who serves as executive director of Orphanage

Emmanuel along with his wife, Lourdes, says Union students have influenced the lives of countless children through their work at the orphanage. But the orphanage has also helped the students by opening their eyes to another part of the world and giving them challenges to overcome.

"They get exposure to a different country's lifestyle while here that is very different from that of the states," McCollum says. "Emmanuel being the size of a small town population-wise creates a challenging environment with unique situations in which to serve. These challenges help the students to have hands-on problem-solving experiences."

McCollum says the orphanage anticipates the Union trip every year, and they are grateful for all the work

Union has done over the past two decades. Brady says this is one of the primary goals of GO Trips. He wants to see good work done on the field.

"When we walk away, we want our partners there to say, 'We couldn't do this work had the team from Union not been here,'" Brady says.

He says Union tries to select GO Trips that appeal to the skills of lots of different students so they realize they can use those skills for the glory of God. He wants to see students engage in different settings so that they can learn and grow as followers of Christ.

"A lot of times the greatest insights come from cross-cultural service," Brady says. "We want them to experience that our God is a global God, and the world does not look like our hometowns." 📖



Union employee Kayla Corona plays with a child at Orphanage Emanuel.





# MERITORIOUS 16 17 SERVICE AWARDS

Union University has a long history of producing graduates who excel in their careers, in ministry, in service and in life. Each year at Homecoming, the university presents a number of Meritorious Service Awards to select graduates who have distinguished themselves in a number of ways.

Awards include the Alumni of the Year Award, the Distinguished Service Award, the Outstanding Young Alumni Award, the Lest We Forget Award, the G.M. Savage Legacy Award, and several Distinguished Achievement Awards.

In the pages that follow, we highlight the winners of the 2016 Meritorious Service Awards. We congratulate them on all they have accomplished, and we are thankful for the ways their lives have helped to extend the mission of Union University to serve the church and society. 🏡



**David Blackstock**

## Alumnus *of the* Year

Presented to a Union University graduate for distinction in his/her profession, service to mankind, and/or contribution to Union University.

David Blackstock served as Union University's women's basketball coach for 17 seasons. During that time, the team won five district championships, 12 conference championships, an NAIA national championship, and went to numerous tournaments and finals.

Blackstock graduated from Union in 1964 with a degree in physical education and wellness. He says he learned many great values from his coaches and professors while attending Union.

"Mrs. Gracie Williams was the head of the physical education program at the time, and she had very high standards for the people in her department," Blackstock says. "She taught us more than what was in books. She demanded that the guys in the program always act like gentlemen. She expected excellence from her majors regardless of what other courses you took or what other extracurricular activities you were involved in on campus."

As a Jackson native, Blackstock says he always saw Union as a great Christian school. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the university, he got a master's degree from Memphis State University and a doctorate from the University of Southern Mississippi. In 1973, he returned to Union as director of athletics and chairman of the Department of Physical Education, Wellness and Sport.

Blackstock coached Union's baseball team for 11 seasons, and in 1983, his team finished third in the NAIA World Series. He compiled a 509-89

record during his 17 seasons as the coach of the Lady Bulldogs basketball team, leading them to the national title game three times. In 1998, the team won the NAIA national championship, and Blackstock was named NAIA Coach of the Year. He retired from coaching shortly after.



Blackstock has continued to work with athletics at Union, serving in the PEWS department and volunteering as a coach for the softball team. He and his wife, Armita, have been married for 50 years and have two children, Dixie and Rebel.

"I still come to some of the Lady Bulldog basketball games and softball and baseball games," Blackstock says. 🏡



# Distinguished Service Award



Presented to a member of the Union community for distinction in his/her profession, service to mankind, and/or contribution to Union University.

**Keith Absher**  
POSTHUMOUSLY

**K** eith Absher's wife, Beverly, says he went to college when he was 17 and never left a college campus.

"He loved it," she says. "He loved students. Doing something with or for the students, having students seek his counsel, any activity that he could do with them was as exciting the day before he died as it was the first day he was able to do it."

Keith Absher served as dean of Union's McAfee School of Business Administration for 12 years before his death in 2015 at age 63 following a battle with Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Originally from Florence, Alabama, Absher came to Union as dean in 2004 after serving for many years in the management and marketing department at the University of North Alabama. He taught previously at Athens State University and the University of Arkansas.

He earned his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Business Administration degrees from Jacksonville State University, another master's degree from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and his doctorate from the University of Arkansas.

Union President Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver described Absher as a capable administrator, a faithful churchman, a generous giver, a devoted husband and a loving father and grandfather.

"Because Keith was a follower of Jesus Christ, we do not grieve as those who have no hope," Oliver says. "We know his eternal destiny is secure, and we are grateful that he is now in

the presence of his Savior. We thank God for Keith's life, legacy and commitment to Union University."

Absher played an instrumental role in the McAfee School of Business Administration earning accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in 2013. The AACSB designation is what he described as "the gold standard" of business school accreditation, placing the McAfee School in the top 5 percent of business schools in the world.

He also served for six years as Union's Faculty Athletics Representative, a role mandated by the NCAA.

Absher was a Sunday school teacher at Englewood Baptist Church. He and Beverly have two grown children and seven grandchildren.

Hunter Martin (2015 and 2016), an accounting major from Greenfield, Tennessee, says Absher always greeted students by name when they passed him in the halls.

"He made every effort to build relationships with us and keep himself open to our concerns," Martin says. "I'll never forget the warm hospitality he and Mrs. Beverly showed each year by inviting the entire business school for a cookout and hayride at their farm. His role as a Christian business leader is one I plan to model in my future career." 📖

# Outstanding Young Alumna

Presented to up to three Union University graduates who are age 40 or younger with a record of significant accomplishment in professional life and service to Union University or the world.



**Allison Davis**

**A** llison Davis says she always wanted to care for other people, and nursing is the perfect way to carry out that dream.

Davis graduated from Union's Master of Science in Nursing program in 2011 and began working as a family nurse practitioner. In 2012, she joined the faculty at Union University on the Hendersonville campus. She received her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Vanderbilt in 2015 and became chair of undergraduate nursing at Union University Hendersonville in 2016.

"Union taught me to look at patients as a whole," Davis says, "taking into account that they are a person and so much more than a diagnosis or a prescription. I learned to take every opportunity to address the spiritual needs they have."

Davis says she has been able to pray with many of her patients, and she makes sure to pray with her students as

well. She says the things that attracted her to Union are the same things she tries to provide for her students—a Christian environment and excellent academics. She says the professors at Union painted a picture of the nurse practitioner she wanted to be.

"They love the Lord with all their hearts, and they exude that," Davis says. "But they also demand excellence and care for patients and students from the inside out."

She says at Union, the foundation of nursing is not only academic, but it is also spiritual.

"Why are we doing this?" she asks. "We're doing this to be the hands and feet of Christ." 📖





# Lest We Forget Award

Presented in recognition of longtime service and contributions to the Union University community.



## Alan Chamness

**T**he almost wall-to-wall photographs in Alan Chamness' office are a roadmap of his 50 years in ministry, with close to 142 people having attended Union University under his guidance.

"I always teach kids that you have to have vehicles in ministry," Chamness says. As minister of music and senior adults at First Baptist Church in Henderson, Kentucky, Chamness says, "My Toyota is music. It's a universal language."

Chamness graduated from Union in 1970 and Southern Seminary in 1973, focusing on studies in music. After graduating, he moved to Henderson and involved himself in the community there.

"I'm sold where I'm at," Chamness says. "Bloom where you're planted. I learned that at Union from the wonderful professors, teachers and staff."

Blooming for Chamness means discipling, and for 35 years, he helped with the largest in-home Bible study in Henderson. He credits the one-on-one time he had with students as the most effective time of teaching.

"All my students who I sent to Union were faithful to that study," Chamness says. "We have what we call a legacy church. You build one generation to build another, and I've enjoyed working with the third generation of my first youth group. I am surrounded by kids that have grown up in this ministry."

When he was a teenager himself, Chamness felt called to the ministry, leading him to Union University.

"When I visited, I said, 'This is it.' I felt the presence of the Lord there, from the day I got there to the day I left," Chamness says. "Union gave me a chance to grow and to really see what the kingdom was. We were constantly being challenged to do better, love better, live better in the name of the Lord."

During his time at Union, a theology professor took him to visit Liberty Grove, a church without a pastor at the time. Chamness recalls working there for three years and saying, "It was easy to fall in love with the Lord again."

Now, with music as his vehicle, Chamness preaches and sings at funerals and weddings, visits hospitals and nursing homes and teaches private voice and piano lessons. He directs his church's adult choir and plays the piano for the praise team. And although he no longer serves as minister of youth, he continues to invest in the church's and community's young people.

"You can see where my heart is, with people," Chamness says. "And that's what Jesus calls on us to do. Go tell all, tell the whole world." 🌱



## William H. Latimer

# Robert E. Craig *Service Award*

Presented to men and women who have given significant service and contributions to ensure the future of Union University.

**B**ill Latimer didn't graduate from Union University, but his involvement in Union life has transformed the institution for decades to come.

Bill and Carol Latimer were the lead donors to The Logos, Union's library that opened in 2015. Because of their \$10 million matching gift, Union was able to build a 53,000-square-foot facility that is now the centerpiece to the campus.

"I've always valued education, especially a Christian education, because I think we are supposed to help spread the gospel," Latimer says.

A native of Union City, Tennessee, Latimer graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 1960 with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. After serving in the army, he returned to his Union City home and was involved in several businesses over the years before he began trading commodities.

The Latimer Foundation played a large role in construction of a new library in Dyer County, increasing the facility's space from 8,000 square feet to almost 30,000 square feet. Latimer saw how that investment helped raise the community's education level.

"I knew that Union really needed a library, so we just decided that we would make a matching gift to a Christian university, and Union was the nearest one that we wanted to help support," he says.

Latimer says The Logos has a couple of unique characteristics that he likes—both sides are designed as main entrances to the building, and there are no plaques inside the library, which he says adds to the aesthetic value.

He says Union President Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver deserves credit for his role in bringing the library to completion—"I think Union is very fortunate to have someone like Dub Oliver as its president," he says.

And he's grateful to have played such an important role in the life of Union University.

"God has blessed me tremendously," Latimer says. "You need to use the blessings that God has given you to bless others." 🌱



# G.M. Savage *Legacy* Award

Given to a faculty or staff member for their ongoing commitment to Christ-centered education at Union University.



## Reneé Jones

From a first generational college student to the director of Union University's Hundley Center, Reneé Jones exemplifies a commitment to excellence that began in her childhood.

"I grew up in a single-parent home with a mother who allowed for no excuses and set high standards," Jones says. "When you are surrounded by high expectations, you tend to rise to the occasion. And being at Union has afforded me some amazing opportunities to achieve goals I didn't even know were there yet."

Although Jones received her bachelor's and graduate degree from Union, she originally planned to attend the University of Tennessee. After a presentation on chemical reactions in which she compared smiling to a chemical reaction, former Union University President David S. Dockery approached her. His confidence she would attend Union for her bachelor's became the first time Jones heard about the university.

"I wanted to further my education at a challenging institution," Jones says. "I was blessed that it was Christ-centered too, and I have thrived ever since."

Thriving meant accepting a part-time secretary position under the mentorship of Jacqueline Taylor in Career Services as an undergraduate.

"I got the position with no intention to remain, and here we are after promotions and growth and training," Jones says. "Dr. Taylor became my mentor. She challenged me, and it is important to challenge people and to ultimately glorify Christ."

From part-time secretary to associate director

of the Vocatio Center, Jones spent 14 years "counseling, networking, training and developing students."

"If you're intentional about reaching minds and souls and helping people to identity their gifts and develop and cultivate them, there's a reward every day," Jones says.

The transition from Vocatio Center associate director to director of the Hundley Center was like "coming full circle on the spectrum" for Jones, moving from career guidance to academic preparation.

"Here in the Hundley, we're working with the best and the brightest in a ministry position, and we're serving all of the student body while supporting the work of faculty," Jones says.

Jones has seen the Hundley Center through four locations and from a stigmatized service on campus to one wearing the motto of "Smart people start here." The average GPA of a student visiting the Hundley Center is a 3.0, Jones says.

"There is a hub of partnerships between our center, our faculty and our students," Jones says. "And this partnership is predicated on the thought that we are excellence-driven."

For Jones, the same excellence instilled in her by her mother is also in her vision for the Hundley Center, creating within it a place of belonging for all students. 📌



# Distinguished *Achievement* Award

Union University presents the Distinguished Achievement Award to alumni who have made significant contributions in their profession.

### THE AREAS AWARDED INCLUDE:

Health Care	Government/Public Service
Business	Research/Sciences
Arts/Media	Not-for-Profit
Education	Athletics
Church Ministry	

From surgical care nurse to interim president and CEO of West Tennessee Healthcare, J.R. Ross has pursued excellence in health care since his Union graduation in 1985.

"It's amazing to see where I've got to today from being a little country boy from Jacks Creek, Tennessee," Ross says. "Being named the interim CEO is absolutely the pinnacle of anybody's career, but for sure for me. After the 31 plus years that I've been here, to be asked to carry that torch for the past year is absolutely rewarding."

Ross grew interested in the health care profession at a young age while watching his father work with an ambulance service.

"To hear him talk about getting up, going to make an ambulance call, it was really more of a calling early in life," Ross says.

Before graduating high school, Ross received his own emergency medical technician license and took his certification exam after graduation. Working with the ambulance service helped pay his way through schooling at Jackson State Community College and then Union University.



## James Ross

## *Distinguished Achievement in* Health Care

"At Union we got to work with professors who taught us how to live the Christian perspective, and that helped us understand why we were getting into this

calling of serving others," Ross says.

Ross continues to serve others on Union's campus by being on the Union Foundation Board and Board of Regents. On a daily basis, he works with West Tennessee Healthcare's trustees and a "great group of vice presidents" to maintain the vision of the organization where he is interim CEO.

"I used to say, 'I want every patient to receive the same quality of care that I would want to receive,' but I've changed that," Ross says. "I think we should be working to exceed what we would want."

For Ross this vision means ensuring Jackson General is "an exceptional place for patients to receive health care." 📌





## Robyn Hari

### *Distinguished Achievement in* **Business**

**R**obyn Hari's calling to work in finance is about more than helping clients decide what to do with their money. It's about compassion for their situations.

Before working at Diversified Trust, Hari began her own advisory firm in Brentwood, Tennessee, in 1995.

"I don't really think in terms of achievement, but rather in opportunities the Lord has provided," Hari says. "However, in hindsight, I realize that establishing my own registered investment advisory firm at the age of 30 in a very male-dominated field was not an easy task."

Advising clients is not the only way Hari shows compassion for her community. She also serves actively at ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee, working with student ministry and serving on multiple committees. Hari

is currently on the Board of Trustees for Union University, as well.

"To be honest, I never considered going anywhere other than Union," Hari says.

"My parents and older sister were Union graduates. I knew Union was a close-knit, Christ-centered community of people who were devoted to both a strong academic experience and spiritual growth."

Hari met her husband, Rod, at Union and set the "strong academic foundation" that readied her for the evolving field of finance during her time there.

"Looking back," Hari says, "the Lord used all of those experiences to prepare me for what he had planned for my life." 📖

Managing principal of the Nashville office of Diversified Trust since 2012, Hari assists individuals, families and institutions in the management of their wealth.

"I wanted to find a way to combine my accounting and finance skills with my desire to make a difference in people's lives," Hari says. "I have walked through some very difficult situations with people... who are left to make important financial decisions at a time when they are emotionally drained and heartbroken. I have oftentimes wished I had a double major in accounting and counseling."



**F**rom buses to mailboxes to signs, William Gregory ('48) continues to leave a mark on Jackson, Tennessee, two years after retirement from his business Gregory Signs.

### *Distinguished Achievement in* **Arts/Media**

## William (Bill) Gregory

"I learned it on my own," Gregory says, explaining how he started the graphic design business. "I'd always been fiddling around with drawing ever since I was a little kid. I went to art classes in high school, but they don't teach you much from drawing vases, so the teacher had me drawing airplanes."

Following graduation from high school, Gregory found himself drafted into the navy during wartime, spending two years on the water off and on.

Attending Union University became the natural next step for Gregory, who grew up on Chester Street in Jackson as part of a family of churchgoers.

Recounting his graduation, 20 years with an industrial packaging company and the years running Gregory Signs,

he says that among his many accomplishments he is most proud of drawing closer to the Lord. As with every other experience he shares, he finishes with a quiet laugh, saying, "I guess that's nothing too dramatic."

The beginning of Gregory Signs in 1983 earned the same "undramatic" qualifier from Gregory.

"I just decided to do something on my own," Gregory says. "It was more or less wanting to help people out that needed signs and couldn't afford the sign company."

Success has many definitions, but all Gregory has to say after his time of travel and work is that "It's just been a big adventure" one that continues to change the face of Jackson, Tennessee. 📖

**F**or alumna Brenda Briley, teaching for 26 years in public education was not just a job but a passion, and she never imagined God might call her to a different mission: Trinity Christian Academy in Jackson, Tennessee.

### *Distinguished Achievement in* **Education**

## Brenda Briley



"I'm learning now just because God has you in a place you love doesn't mean you'll always be there," Briley says. "Before going to Trinity, God slowly started changing me, changing my heart."

Briley taught at Nova Elementary in Jackson for four years and Pope Elementary, also in Jackson, for 22 years. Now 2017 marks the third year since her transition to teaching at Trinity.

"Everything we do at Trinity is biblically integrated," Briley says. "It's more about discipleship. We have the opportunity to really build bonds with students and walk them through life."

Briley knew she would become an educator by her sophomore year of college. Drawn to Union University's academic excellence and focus on a Christian worldview, she began attending.

"My first class after graduating was the hardest I've ever had," Briley says. "But Union's different. It's so much bigger than what you can put down. God called me here because he knew what my first year of teaching would be like. He gave me what I needed."

With a mission-minded plan, Briley believed she would stay in public education "for the long haul."

"I'm one of those people you have to push out of the nest," Briley says. "I used to say I'd never teach middle schoolers, but God opened the door and said, 'Yes, you will,' and suddenly I got this passion to want to teach middle school."

Since "stepping out in faith," Briley says she now has the opportunity to speak truth more directly into the lives of her students. 📖

**S**tudying at Union University taught Robert Briley a simple truth that carried through 33 years in the education field: he does not teach history. He teaches students.

While Briley's passion for history started young, he says he views his 30 years teaching at North Side High School in Jackson, Tennessee, as an evangelistic calling.

"You're very limited in the public school with what you can and cannot say," Briley says. "I would try to historically weave Christian stories, Christian themes and Christian ideas into my lessons. History has a fabric of theology all the way through it, and sometimes we overlook it."

Growing up with parents telling stories of living through the Great Depression and



For the last three years, Briley has taught at Trinity Christian Academy in Jackson after retiring from the public school system. He says his calling is discipleship now.

But whether the calling is evangelism or discipleship, the joy Briley receives from teaching students is told through a simple story: "I recently had a knee

## Robert Briley

### *Distinguished Achievement in* **Education**

World War II, Briley quickly immersed himself in the importance of the past.

"God uses history as a tool to teach lessons," Briley says. "He says, 'Write this down.' What does that mean? Keep a record. Not only do I want you to know this, I want the subsequent generations to know about this."

surgery, and right before I got put under anesthesia, a nurse comes up to me and says, 'Mr. Briley, I'm gonna take care of you.' And it was one of my students from 25 years ago. That's what I'm proud of, the success of my students when I see them out in the community making the world around them a better place." 📖



Distinguished Achievement in

# Government/Public Service

Josh Trent serves as the deputy chief counsel for the Health Subcommittee of the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the United States Congress. He says every week he relies on the basic building blocks of critical thinking and communications skills that Union helped him develop.

Josh Trent



“Union helped me flesh out an understanding of how each person is made in God’s image and thus is capable of accomplishing great good, yet fallen and thus capable of committing great evil,” Trent says. “Studying the Bible, history and ethics, I gained a better appreciation of the depravity of humankind’s sin and the gloriousness of the grace and forgiveness found in Jesus.”

Trent graduated from Union with degrees in communication arts and Christian ethics. After graduation, he moved to Washington, D.C., to intern in the George W. Bush administration. He worked at the Labor Department, the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services. After getting his master’s degree in international relations, Trent worked on health care policy in the U.S. Senate.

Trent says many of the lessons he learned in his undergraduate years still inform his thinking as a professional today, and some of his strongest and dearest friendships were forged at Union.

“There were so many faculty, staff and administrators who I learned from inside and outside of the classroom,” Trent says. “They each helped shape and inform my thinking professionally and personally in different ways.”

He says Union’s commitment to a Christian worldview, rigorous intellectual inquiry and integration of faith and learning made him a well-rounded student and professional.

“The things that made Union attractive to me in 1997 remain hallmarks of the Union experience two decades later,” Trent says. 📖

While the first man stepped onto the moon, Union University alumnus James Scates watched, knowing he had a role in that giant leap for mankind.

Scates’ road to a career in research science began with an offer to attend Union University on a music scholarship.

his years at Union and in his early career were spent “trying to catch up with technology, as it was increasing rapidly.”



Distinguished Achievement in

# Research/Sciences

James Scates

After two semesters, he shifted course to pursue a double major in mathematics and English.

“I enjoyed the comradeship of a large percentage of the student body,” Scates says of his time at Union. “If you were not friends with them, you at least knew who they were.”

Drawn to the research sciences after President John F. Kennedy talked about putting a man on the moon, Scates says

“Later, I was trying to use existing technology to produce newer technology,” Scates says. “And we used the technology to the fullest” in the completion of the space race.

Scates says knowing that he had a small part in bringing about that accomplishment is what he considers to be the most satisfying moment of his career.

In addition to being on the team to put men on the moon and the U.S. Space

Station, Scates also served in the navy on an aircraft carrier for four years and worked for Dover Elevator Corporation as a draftsman. Finally, he worked for 31 years at The Boeing Company as an engineering aide, systems analyst and supervisor until his retirement.

Now, since his retirement in 1995, he says, “I am currently working on house cleaning, a job for which I can’t get paid.” 📖



For Justin Wainscott, his undergraduate years in classrooms at Union University provided a solid foundation for his graduate study and his work in ministry.

“We are all products of the communities we belong to, and I am extremely grateful to have been a part of a community like

For those considering the choice of a university, Wainscott regularly points them to Union.

Distinguished Achievement in

# Church Ministry

Justin Wainscott

“After graduating from Union, I went on to seminary,” says Wainscott, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Tennessee. “And not only did I feel very well-prepared for further theological studies, but in talking with my seminary classmates from other undergraduate institutions, I quickly realized how immensely blessed I was to receive the education I did at Union.”

But that preparation went beyond the academic and encompassed every part of his life.

Union that was so formative for me—spiritually, intellectually, theologically, missionally, pastorally, etc.,” he says. “I am who I am today and I am where I am today in large part because of my time at Union.”

A native of Somerville, Tennessee, who graduated from Union in 2002 with a degree in Christian ethics, Wainscott says his path to pastoral ministry came about through God’s calling and providence but also because of the affirmation of people in his home church and at Union.

“Choosing a college is one of the most significant decisions you will make because the friendships and relationships you form in college are likely going to be some of the most important and lasting relationships you’ll have throughout your life,” he says. “And I can’t think of a better place than Union University to find and form those kinds of relationships. Not to mention, you’ll receive a top-tier Christian education at one of the finest undergraduate institutions in the country.” 📖

Hannah Guthrie, a nursing graduate, said Union gave her a foundation for her career, but it also gave her a foundation for living a Christian life.

“I got to learn from professors who taught me what would happen in the world, but they taught me from a biblical perspective,” Guthrie says. “Union taught me how to honor the Lord through my career even if I was in a position where I wasn’t necessarily allowed to verbalize that.”

“From the time I was at Union to the time I was moving to Las Vegas, the professors that I had and the friends that I made have been



Distinguished Achievement in

# Hannah Guthrie

# Not-for-Profit

Guthrie began her post-graduate career at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital in Memphis, where she worked in pediatric neurology. She then took a position in the Family Birth Center at Regional Hospital of Jackson, Tennessee.

In 2016, she moved to Nevada to be part of a church plant in Las Vegas. She worked in labor and delivery before taking her current job as Bachelor of Science in Nursing success coordinator in the School of Nursing at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She says Union provided a consistent Christian support system throughout all of these changes.

an incredible support system,” Guthrie says. “I still have nursing professors that I could call if I had a question.”

While at Union, Guthrie was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha and played on many intramural teams. She says these activities helped her build those important relationships.

“I was able to build a sense of community,” Guthrie says. “But I also built valuable leadership skills.” 📖





In 2015, Dexter Williams became principal and athletic director at West Carroll Junior Senior High School, the high school from which he graduated 20 years earlier.

## Dexter Williams

## Distinguished Achievement in Athletics

"I've come home," Williams says.

Williams began his career in education as a coach. He graduated from Union in 2000 with a degree in sports management and physical education and health and took a position at North East Middle School in Jackson teaching physical education and coaching boys' basketball.

He says he was only able to attend Union because he received a basketball scholarship. Williams played on Union's basketball team from 1995 to 1999,

and he says his coaches and teammates demonstrated their faith on and off the court.

"People genuinely cared for each other and tried to pour God's Word into everybody," Williams says. "That was something I had never seen before and something that had a huge impact on me."

Williams continued his coaching career in Jackson, leading the Liberty Technology Magnet High School boys' basketball team to its first state championship in 2006. While at Liberty Tech, Williams served as assistant

principal and later became principal at Tigrett Middle School. He worked for the Milan Board of Education before taking his current position. In 2017, he will take over as superintendent of the West Carroll Special School District.

Williams says his time at Union taught him how to treat people and how to have a strong work ethic.

"Through the course work that I had to take and being a basketball player, that work ethic developed and became a strength of mine," Williams says. "That's how I've come as far as I have." 🏀

# Save the Date for Homecoming 2017

NOVEMBER 2-4

Make plans to be a part of special events throughout the weekend, including the 50-year reunion of the Class of 1968.

We hope to see you back home on campus this fall!



## OLD SCHOOL

ALUMNI NEWS

### 60's | SIXTIES |

**Tom Upchurch ('63)** was named Rotarian of the Year for 2015-2016



for Rotary District 6910. The Rotary International District Rotarian of the Year annual award is designated to the one Rotarian of the more than 3,200 members and 73 clubs in District 6910 who stands out in demonstrating "service above self." Upchurch is assistant governor for Area XII and member of the Rotary Club of Gwinnett County in Duluth, Ga.

### 70's | SEVENTIES |

**James L. Kirby ('71)** was selected for inclusion in the 2017 Best Lawyers in America for commercial litigation, construction law, medical malpractice law-defendants and medical malpractice law-plaintiffs, and was named Best Lawyers Construction Law "Lawyer of the Year" in Memphis in 2016. In addition, Kirby was named to the list of the 2016 Mid-South Super Lawyers for his work in business litigation.

**Scott McDaniel Andrews ('79)** was inducted to the East Tennessee Chapter of the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame on April 16, 2016. He received the George L. Hunter Distinguished Community Service Award for his 25 years of service to Sevier County High School. He currently serves as associate pastor of worship at First Baptist Church in Sevierville, Tenn.

### 80's | EIGHTIES |

**Mike Hammonds ('85)** was called as pastor to First Baptist Church in Sunbright, Tenn.

**Cindy Womble**, Union student in '85 and '87, and her husband, Jeff Womble, returned to Southeast Asia on May 29, 2016, with their youngest daughter, Bethany, to continue work as church planters and evangelists with the International Mission Board.

**Tom Magee ('87)** has been serving as worship pastor of



NorthStar Baptist Church in Idaho, for 13 years. He and his wife, **Fondra Jones Magee ('86)**,

moved with their sons, Mason and Carson, to help plant a church with the North American Mission Board. Fondra now serves on the National WMU executive board as WMU President of the Utah/Idaho SBC.

**Clay Hallmark ('89)** began his ministry as senior pastor at First



Baptist Church of Lexington, Tenn., on Feb. 1, 2016. For the last 15 years, he was senior pastor at

First Baptist Marion, Ark., and served two terms as president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention. He now serves on Union's Board of Regents and on the Board of Trustees for Union's ATO Chapter.

### 90's | NINETIES |

**JJ Jones ('90)** began serving as



the family equipping pastor for Fellowship Nashville's Franklin, Tenn., campus in 2016.

**Lloyd Freeman ('91)**, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps, is now a political officer of the American embassy in Kuwait, working to protect human rights.

**Carey Dyer ('93)** and his wife, Dena, published their new book,



*Love at First Fight: 52 Story-Based Meditations for Couples*, with Barbour Publishing in September 2016.

**Jennifer Carter-Johnson ('96)** received tenure at Michigan State University College of Law, focusing her research on the intersection of scientific research and the law.

**Patrick Powell ('97)** and his wife, **Suzanne Wallis Powell ('97)**,



are now living in Grand Cayman with their two

youngest children, Zane and Emma. Patrick serves as senior pastor of FBC Grand Cayman, and Suzanne works as a part-time nurse. Their oldest son, Ben, is attending the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

**J. Matthew Kirby ('98)** was selected for inclusion in the 2017 Best Lawyers in America for workers' compensation law-employers.

### 00's | TWO THOUSANDS |

**Kathy O. Lofton's ('00)** first documentary, *I am a Caregiver*, was screened as an official selection



of the Life Fest Film Festival in Los Angeles, Calif., April 28-May 1,

2016. She wrote, directed and executive produced the film. In addition to working on two film shorts for the competition, she also published a Christian-themed book for adolescents, *Kandler's First Kiss*.

**Lynn Pape Fuller ('02)** was selected as a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching recipient for 2016-2017. She spent the fall of 2016 living in Palestinian territories to research the use of oral history to aid second language writing. She teaches in Madison County, Miss.

**Kristen White ('02)** earned her Ph.D. in higher education from Claremont Graduate University in California. Her dissertation is entitled "International Service-Learning: Faculty Engagement and Transformation." She now serves as chair and assistant professor of intercultural studies at Belhaven University.

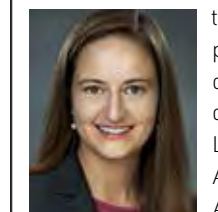
**Margaret Lee Ritsema ('03)** and her husband, Matt Dae Jong Ritsema, adopted their daughter, Charlotte



"Lotti" AhHae Ritsema, from South Korea on Dec. 3, 2015.

**Jeremy Wayne Scott ('03)** accepted the position of photographer for Oklahoma Baptist University.

**Sarah Hasford ('05)** published her first book, *America Invents Act Primer*, on March 8, 2017. The book is a patent law



treatise that provides comprehensive coverage of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act patent legislation that was passed in 2011.

**Ashley Burling ('06)** celebrated her fifth year of working for Surrey County Council on Oct. 3, 2016. She moved outside of London in 2010 with her husband Peter Burling, welcoming their son, Edward David Burling, into the family on March 7, 2014.

**Renee Emerson ('08)** released her second poetry collection, *Threshing*

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## OLD SCHOOL

ALUMNI NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45



*Floor*, from Jacar Press. She also received an individual artist grant from the Arkansas Arts Council.

### 10's | TWENTY TENS |

**Shep Shepherd ('10)** earned his Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. His doctoral thesis is entitled *The Body of Christ: T. F. Torrance's Ecclesial Ontology*.

**Maggie Ledbetter Sandusky ('12)** received a Master of Divinity with a concentration in women's studies from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on May 6, 2016. She is continuing to work for SWBTS while her husband, Ethan, finishes his studies.

### Births

Miller Augusta Pettigrew was born Aug. 19, 2016, to **Kirby Pettigrew ('08)** and **Joshua Lee Pettigrew ('08)**.



Charlotte Julianne Turner was born Feb. 24, 2016, to **Julie Dodson Turner ('02)** and Ty Turner of Collierville, Tenn.



Reagan Elizabeth Brasher was born Feb. 21, 2017, to **Logan Brasher ('15)** and **Rebecca Brasher ('16)**.

### Marriages

**Ginny Smith Gallion ('04)** married Ali Gallion on Aug. 21, 2015, in Brooklyn, N.Y. The couple currently resides in New York City.

**Cam Armstrong ('05)** married Patrick Conn on July 16, 2016, at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in New Orleans, La.



**Mary Annis ('10)** married Aaron Boynton at Christ Community Church in Belchertown, Mass., on April 23, 2016. They now live in New York.



**Jordan Wilson ('13)** married Whitney Wilson in Roswell, Ga., on May 7, 2016.

**Elyssa Helene Strand ('14)** married James Aaron Parrow on

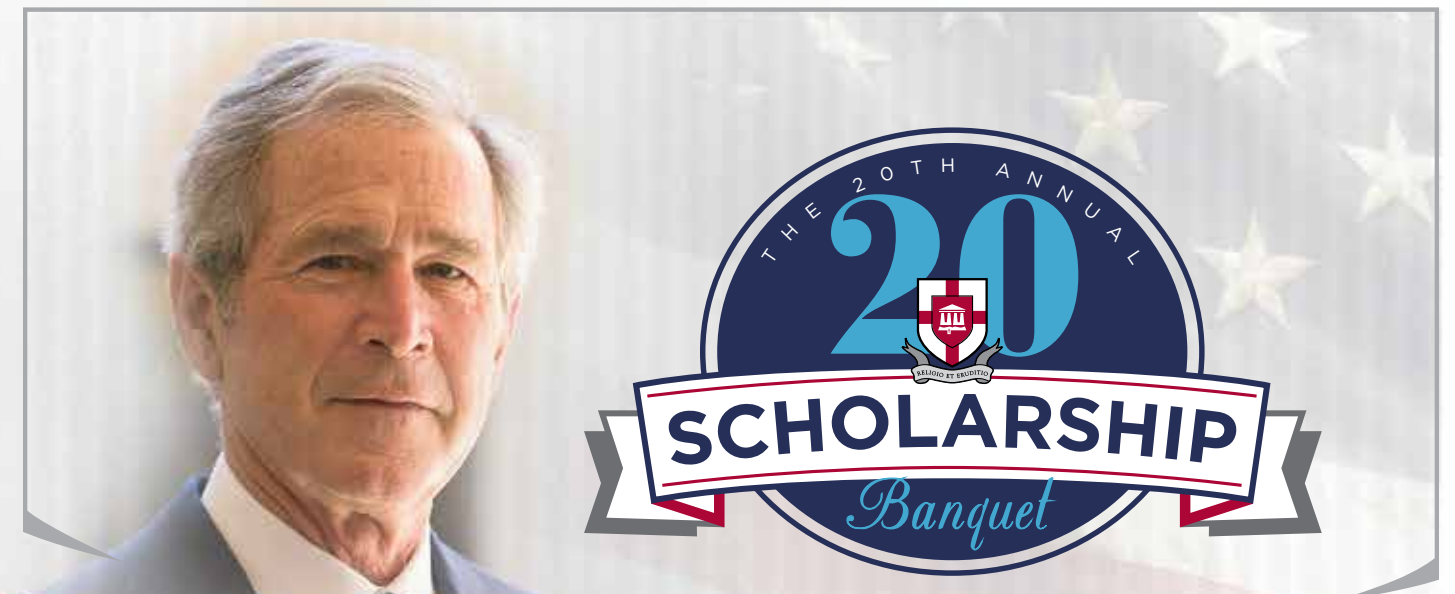


Dec. 31, 2015, in Lakeville, Minn. She now works for a public accounting firm based out of Minneapolis.

**Alexis Van Pham Gibbons ('15)** married



**Christopher Ryan Gibbons ('11)** in Jackson, Tenn., on April 30, 2016.



## FEATURING George W. Bush 43rd President of the United States

# GOD IN THE WHIRLWIND

A 10-YEAR REMEMBRANCE

Join us Feb. 2-3, 2018, as we mark the 10-year anniversary of the Feb. 5, 2008, tornado that hit the Union campus. We will celebrate God's provision and faithfulness during that disaster.

Former administrators, students, community leaders and rescue workers will be in attendance.

More information will be available in the near future.



Join us for the 20th Annual Scholarship Banquet Tuesday, October 17, 2017.

The banquet will be a celebration of 20 years of Scholarship Banquets and the generous donors who have made a Christ-centered education possible. The evening will feature a conversation with the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush.

Sponsorships include priority dinner seating, a photo opportunity and autographed copies of President Bush's latest book, *Portraits of Courage: A Commander in Chief's Tribute to America's Warriors*.

For more information, call the Office of Institutional Advancement at 731.661.5050 or visit [uu.edu/events/scholarshipbanquet](http://uu.edu/events/scholarshipbanquet).



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# Memoriam

**Bertie Martin Fesmire ('40)**, age 99, died Jan. 25, 2016. He is survived by his son, Bertie Martin Jr., and his daughter, Ellen Elizabeth Fesmire.

**Rush W Siler ('40)** passed away April 26, 2016, in Lexington, Tenn., at the age of 99. A life-long educator, he is remembered by his children, Vance W. Siler and Betsy Jane Bolden, and the students he taught.

**Byrnes Butler ('43)** passed away July 16, 2016. She is survived by her niece, Cynthia Kirkpatrick.

**James Thomas Ford Sr. ('43)** died Nov. 23, 2016, after years of church-planting ministry. He is survived by his son, Tom Ford, and his sister, Freida Moss.

**Andrew L. Williams Jr. ('44)** passed away Aug. 23, 2016, in Katy, Texas. A World War II veteran, Andrew lived until the age of 94. He is survived by his wife, Frances Tate Williams, and his two children.

**Bettye Ruth Crocker ('45)**, of Bartlett, Tenn., died Jan. 20, 2017. She and her husband served as missionaries in Ecuador after graduating from seminary. She is survived by her son, Tom Crocker, and her daughter, Becky Yarbrough.

**Mary Helen Ford ('46)** passed away Aug. 8, 2016. She is survived by her son, Tom Ford.

**Roy Leonard Simmons Jr.**, Union University student from **1946-1947**, passed away April, 2016.

**Herbert R. Higdon ('50)**, age 89, passed away August 2016. A pastor for over 60 years, he also served on the Board of Trustees for Union University and was then elected president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1997. He is survived by his three daughters: Anita Simmons, Nancy Tucker and Susan Hopper.

**Frank Fisher Johnson ('50)** passed away Sept. 29, 2016, at age 87. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Tommie Sue, and their three sons: Tom, Dwayne and John.

**Fred J. Crosson ('50)**, of Nashville, Tenn., died March 2, 2017. Fred served in the army during the Korean War and spent four decades working as a teacher, coach and principal in the Jackson school system. The Fred J. and Paula Clayton Crosson Trust Scholarship Fund at Union University received donations in his memory. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Paula Clayton Crosson.

**Shirley Anne Bridges Knight ('52)** of Indian Springs, Ala., passed away Dec. 22, 2015, at age 84. She is survived by her son, Karl Coldwell Knight; her daughter, Katherine Haley; and her three grandchildren.

**Jimmy Talley Morris ('59)** died at age 80 on Aug. 9, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Marna Jane Queen Morris, and their two children.

**Keith Edward Wooster ('59)**, of Summerville, S.C., died Aug. 15, 2016. A navy chaplain for 26 years, he lived to be 82. He is survived by his wife Fonda Wooster.

**Prentess Ferrell ('59)** passed away Oct. 16, 2016, in Antonio, Texas. His 50-year ministry brought him to serve churches in Missouri and Texas. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Betty Ferrell, and his two sons.

**Thomas Smith ('60)** passed away Oct. 24, 2016, at age 78. A school teacher of 32 years, he is survived by his wife, Melva; their two sons, John and James; and four grandchildren.



**Tom King ('60)** passed away Nov. 19, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Ginny King.

**Thurmon Ray Harris ('60)** passed away at age 79 on Feb. 23, 2017. After a lifetime of pastoring, he is survived by his wife of 53 years, Peggy Martin Harris, and their three daughters.

**Jack L. Maddox ('61)** died Feb. 8, 2016, at age 78. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Ann Wolf Maddox, and his three children.

**Allen Arnold Tinker ('61)** of Jackson, Tenn., passed away Jan. 20, 2017, at age 77. He is survived by his grandchildren, Anna and James (Tinker) and Julia and Kirsten (Stiles).

**John Butler Hinson ('62)** passed away at age 77 on April 30, 2017. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Emily Vincent Hinson, and their two children.

**Joyce Anne Morris ('62)**, of Somerville, Tenn., died May 20, 2016. She is survived by her husband, Walter "Buster" Morris, and her three daughters.



## Mary Jean Craig

**Mary Jean Craig**, former Union University first lady, passed away July 8, 2016. A former first lady of two other universities, she served alongside her husband, Robert E. Craig, who preceded her in death. She is survived by her daughter and two sons. Memorial donations were made in her honor to the Dr. and Mrs. Robert E. Craig Scholarship Fund at Union University. 📖

**Robert Edwin Alderson ('68)**, age 70, died Nov. 22, 2016. During his time at Union, Robert worked as sports information director and president of the U Club and received the university's top economic honor. Later in life, he served as chairman of Union's Board of Regents and on the President's Advisory Council. He is survived by his mother, Narcie Dennison Alderson; his wife, Jane Matthews Alderson; and his two daughters.

**Richard Anthony Foote ('69)** died Oct. 29, 2016. He is survived by Lana Becher Foote, his wife of 53 years, and his siblings, Donnie and Ginger.

**Violet Stanton Barber ('70)** passed away Nov. 23, 2016. She is survived by four children: Charles, June, David and Betty and was preceded in death by her daughter Donna. She also leaves behind 15 grandchildren and 27 great grandchildren.

**Melvin Glenn Lewis ('71)** died Jan. 5, 2016, at age 66. A resident of Lewisburg, Tenn., he began his medical practice there in 1978. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Beverly Williams Lewis, and his two children.

**Vernell Brooks Killough ('73)**, age 93, passed away May 2016. She is survived by her son, Jerry Killough, and her daughter, Peggy Killough.

**Beverly Ann Fielding Hall ('73)** died Oct. 6, 2016. She worked as a nurse at Jackson-Madison County Hospital for almost 40 years. Beverly is survived by her daughter, Sherry Whener; her son, Mark Hall; her two grandchildren; and many more family members.

**Etheleen M. Collins ('81)** died Feb. 11, 2016. After receiving her BSN from Union University, Etheleen travelled with the American Red Cross for many years. She is survived by her son, Sam, and her three daughters: Terry, Lori and Michelle.

**Fred Ward ('82)** passed away June 3, 2016, at age 72. During his ministry, he served on the executive board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and as a trustee of Union University. He is survived by his wife, Lois Hammons Ward, and his three children.

**Laurie Moling Baker ('82)** and her husband, Mark Baker, passed away Oct. 22, 2016. They are survived by their daughter and son.

**Edward D. Harris ('87)** died July 2016 at age 78. "Eddie" served two

years in the army and 41 years in the Tennessee National Guard as a support services supervisor before retiring. He is survived by his wife, Royce Crossnoe Harris, his three sons and his three daughters.

**Joseph Michael Rowland ('98)** died June 19, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Angela Rowland, and his parents, Dale and Tammy Rowland.

**Stephen W. Phillips ('99)**, of Henderson, Tenn., died Dec. 27, 2016. Months before his death, Phillips released his first book, *Opryland USA*, from Arcadia Publishing and the History Press. The book is a part of the Images of Modern America series, which explores the history of the Nashville attraction.

**Charles Robert Reed ('00)**, of Dyer, Tenn., passed away Nov. 18, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Spring Stohler Reed, and their children, London Christina and Charles Lucian.

**Cindy A. Beckingham ('11)**, of Memphis, Tenn., passed away Dec. 15, 2016. She is survived by her mother, Barbara J. Lawson.

The **UNIONITE** welcomes news from alumni. Please include contact information with your submission. There are three ways to send information:

- Standard mail:**  
Unionite  
1050 Union University Drive  
Jackson, TN 38305
- Email:** [unionite@uu.edu](mailto:unionite@uu.edu)
- Online:** [uu.edu/unionite](http://uu.edu/unionite)



# Shoaf Scholarship established to honor longtime Union supporters

**D**avid and Linda Shoaf didn't attend Union University, but that hasn't stopped them from being strong supporters of the institution in a number of ways.

Linda is currently serving on Union's Board of Trustees for the second time. The Shoafs' contributions in 2002 to the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies led to the purchase of a 1615 edition of the Geneva Bible, the first Bible to penetrate the English world and be widely used by the common people.

The Shoafs also sponsored the Ryan Center's REF500 conference this spring and have been generous donors to student scholarships and the annual Scholarship Banquet.

It is Christ-centered, and that is very important to me, and I feel that there is a tremendous emphasis on prayer and biblical study.



Recently, the Shoafs' two daughters and sons-in-law established the Linda R. and David B. Shoaf Scholarship Fund to honor their parents and to make it possible for home schooled students to attend Union University.

The Shoafs grew up in West Tennessee and were familiar with Union, but they went to college elsewhere. After

moving to Horn Lake, Mississippi, more than 20 years ago, they became reacquainted with Union through their friendship with Charles Fowler, Union's former vice president for university relations.

"Union walks the talk," Linda Shoaf says, "and I think it's evident on that campus. It is Christ-centered, and that is very important to me, and I feel that there is a tremendous emphasis on prayer and biblical study."

The scholarship established by her children to honor her and her husband came as a pleasant surprise to Shoaf.

"I think it says how much my husband and

I appreciate Union and what they do," she says. "We see the value of Christian education much more so today than when we were in school. For them to do this, I think they realize that there was nothing that could honor us more." 📖

## The UNION FUND

CHANGING LIVES TO CHANGE THE WORLD



Your gifts to **THE UNION FUND** help ensure that needs across the campus are met by supporting scholarships, program support, research and capital projects. Join alumni and friends around the world as we seek to preserve and strengthen the legacy of Christ-centered excellence in every discipline and campus experience. **GIVE TO THE UNION FUND TODAY.**

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## V-show 2017

Chi Omega competes in the 20th annual SAC Variety Show. The show also included performances from Kappa Delta, Zeta Tau Alpha, Lambda Chi Alpha and SAC.

*photo by Gretchen Foels '18*

