A word from the dean

This year's newsletter marks the beginning of a new chapter in the story of the School of Theology at Walla Walla University. It marks the transition from 17 years of faithful leadership under Dave Thomas to the end of the first year under my leadership. As I’ve begun this new journey and thought about what the future holds, I’ve reflected on the list of 15 deans who have preceded me—a list that as of 2019 spans back exactly 100 years.

While I know little about most of the 15 men who assumed the responsibilities of being the dean, the fact that the School of Theology is here today is a testimony to their faithful service. It is hard to believe, but the first dean, F.S. Bunch, took up his responsibilities in the same year that the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and transportation of liquor in the United States. Times have certainly changed since 1919. Dean Bunch would have been shocked to discover that the Walla Walla Valley is prime real estate for the wine industry.

In the early years, the dean of the School of Theology changed about every two years. The first dean to break that trend was Frederick A. Schilling, who served for six years (1932–1938). The year he took up his responsibilities as dean marked a historic year for women. It was the year that Hattie Caraway became the first woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate and also the year Amelia Earhart completed the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight by a woman. Women certainly have come a long way since that time—though they still have a way to go in our church. After 10 years of leadership under Paul Heubach, Gordon Balharrie began what would be the first of a historic 15-year term in 1962. During his tenure our nation experienced some of its most difficult moments: the Cuban Missile Crisis, conflict over Civil Rights, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the Watergate scandal, and the final turbulent years of the Vietnam War.

After several shorter appointments, the last four deans served a total of 36 years: John Brunt (1983–1989), Doug Clark (1990–1997), Ernie Bursey (1998–2000), and Dave Thomas (2001–2018). Those years were marked by national scandals, wars, disagreements within the church, and at the outset of Dave Thomas’s first year as dean, the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil, when two hijacked planes slammed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center.

As I’ve reflected on the service of my predecessors, I’ve been struck by a few things. First, we have no say over the events that take place during our leadership. Some have served during times of great progress and opportunity, while others have served in far more difficult and troubling times. Whatever the situation, however, each of us has been called to lead in the shaping of the religious beliefs of the young people who have been entrusted to our care. That is a weighty responsibility and one full of exciting opportunity—though it is far from easy.

As rewarding as it is at times to serve as the dean, I recognize that the success of my predecessors resides primarily in the fact that each of them were committed to doing all the mundane daily tasks necessary to keep the department moving forward. The story is not really about us as individuals, but the far greater good of the mission entrusted to the School of Theology.

While I don’t know what the future holds, my hope is that for however long I’m called to serve as dean, the School of Theology will continue to be marked by faithfulness, integrity, and a love for students that will help us continue to draw students and our campus into closer walk with Jesus as we wait for His return.

Carl Cosaert
Carl Cosaert

WWU School of Theology faculty

Carl Cosaert, dean
Early Christianity/New Testament

Brant Berglin
New Testament/Greek

David Thomas
Practical theology/apologetics

Alden Thompson
Old Testament/Adventist history

Jody Washburn
Old Testament/Hebrew

Pedrito Maynard-Reid
Biblical studies/missiology

Susan Bungard
New Testament

Paul Dybdahl
Mission/New Testament

Mathilde Frey
Old Testament/Hebrew

Words from Scripture

“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:9, ESV
During the past 20 years the School of Theology has worked to foster community and learning in a weekly Sabbath School class on the Walla Walla University campus. The group meets each Sabbath morning in the Kretschmar Hall Physics Lecture Hall for fellowship and lively discussion on biblical topics.

“Theology Sabbath School is an important ministry of the School of Theology. It gives us the opportunity to interact with people from our local church. With a church that is so large it is easy to feel disconnected, so our theology Sabbath School class plays an important role in developing and nurturing community for our members,” said Carl Cosaert, dean of the School of Theology.

Cosaert does much of the organizational work for the class while theology faculty take turns leading the discussion from week to week matching areas of expertise with topics to be studied.

“I think there are two foundational principles that make our Sabbath School class what it is,” said Cosaert. “The first is solid biblical teaching. The main reason people come to our class is because they feel like they are fed biblically. We intentionally spend the majority of our time studying the Bible—usually 45 to 50 minutes. The second foundational principle is the sense of community our class has developed. We are really a church within a church. We are praying, studying, and eating together in wonderful Christian fellowship.”

Among regular class participants is Gary Rittenbach, WWU academic systems and support manager. One dynamic that Rittenbach believes makes the class special is “the strong biblical background and the sense of humor of the instructors. It’s okay to have a good laugh in Sabbath School,” he said.

“I like that all of the teachers are Bible class teachers, and I enjoy the variety of personalities,” said Rittenbach. “The Sabbath School also appeals to a wide age group.”

The class follows a consistent structure each week beginning with singing, then a time for sharing and praying about joys and concerns, followed by the majority of the class time dedicated to Bible study and discussion. The class also meets once each month for a potluck lunch following the church service.

“Sharing your good times and bad times together creates a strong bond and sense of fellowship,” said Rittenbach. “Our class also has an amazing missionary outreach,” said Cosaert. “Through the generosity of our members, we have been able to provide for all kinds of local and international needs. We have sponsored missionaries around the world, built churches in China, helped individuals in need, sponsored students, and all sorts of other projects. We’ve done so much more as a group than we could ever have done individually.”

In Hebrews 10:24–25, Paul reminded the early Christian church of the importance of community. He encouraged them to meet in fellowship in order to connect and uplift each other in discussion and friendship.

The community that has formed around the School of Theology Sabbath School class takes Paul’s words to heart: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
Cosaert named dean as Thomas focuses on teaching

After nearly 15 years of teaching at WWU, Carl Cosaert was appointed the new dean of the School of Theology. Cosaert assumed this new role in September, 2019.

Dave Thomas, professor of practical theology and apologetics, served as dean for 17 years and is now focused on full-time teaching and writing.

Thomas has appreciated having increased interaction with students. He is continuing to refine his teaching skills and improve his course content. A new class for Thomas is “Church Leadership II,” which allows him to work directly with Theology majors in advanced practical preparation for ministry.

Thomas will be increasing speaking engagements, including his work with the Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission. This summer he will be speaking for the Dakota Conference Camp Meeting and has several speaking appointments in 2019–2020 academic year.

Carl Cosaert has shifted smoothly into the role as dean. “I’ve enjoyed taking up my new responsibilities as dean, though it did take a while to get used to being called the ‘dean.’ At the heart of his leadership for the department is Cosaert’s passion for sharing the wonderful news of what God has done for the human race in Christ.

“The School of Theology has a rich academic and spiritual heritage of teaching students and preparing future generations of pastors. I plan to work with my colleagues in helping that heritage to continue and flourish.”

Cosaert served as a pastor for ten years before completing a doctor of philosophy degree in New Testament and Early Christianity from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Cosaert enjoys teaching, writing, and leading groups of students, pastors, and church members on study tours to the Middle East. He is the author of the revised study notes on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians in the Andrews Study Bible (NIV), the commentary on Galatians for the Andrews Bible Commentary, and commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy for the SDA International Bible Commentary. Cosaert is also the New Testament editor for the Andrews Study Bible and a new Adventist study Bible being published in Spain.

Frey elected as president of ASRS beginning in 2020

Mathilde Frey, associate professor of biblical studies, is serving a three-year leadership term with the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. Frey was ASRS vice president in 2018, and will serve as president-elect in 2019 and president in 2020. ASRS formed in 1979 as a community of Seventh-day Adventist scholars with a mission to pursue new knowledge in the realm of religious studies and to provide fellowship among members.

Frey pastored for five years in Germany and, in 2003, moved to the United States to study at Andrews University. In 2008, she accepted a call to teach in the Philippines, and six years later, found her way back to the U.S. Frey has a doctorate in Old Testament from AU. As the first woman from the WWU School of Theology to serve in these leadership roles for ASRS, Frey’s service is timely. Since 2012, the number of women enrolled with majors in theology or biblical studies has doubled in the WWU School of Theology.

InTents theme highlights the call of God

For 27 years, Walla Walla University students have gathered in a large, colorful tent on campus to attend a student-run evangelistic series called InTents. This series of seven meetings is conducted by the Public Evangelism class taught by Pedrito Maynard-Reid, professor of biblical studies and missiology.

While where the tent is pitched on campus has changed from year to year, students remain eager to fill the seats.

“As I began to attend more meetings each year, I began to see the initial and long-term effects that campus evangelism has,” said Katie Wagner, senior theology major and one of the students responsible for this year’s event.

In planning and organizing the meetings, students develop valuable skills for the workplace and learn how to make ministry a central part of their lives. In addition to learning the value of hard work and creative thinking, Wagner said, “We are learning collaboration skills that will work in many places in and out of a church setting.”

This year’s InTents theme, It’s Your Call, highlighted the fact that each speaker has been called to ministry by God. Each of the evening meetings was led by a student who shared their story of God’s call in their lives and equated it to a biblical character.

Wagner described the theme as “a statement of ownership and empowerment that acknowledges every person has a call of God in their life and that empowers each person to make a decision on how they will answer God’s call.”

The meetings began on the evening of May 6 and took place every weekday. Additional meetings were held during the campus-wide CommUnity program on Tuesday morning and on Sabbath morning.

Maynard-Reid receives NASW Lifetime Achievement Award

Pedrito Maynard-Reid, professor of biblical studies and missiology and assistant to the president for diversity, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Public Citizen Award by the National Association of Social Workers, Washington Chapter.

“Pedrito has been training, teaching, and organizing for greater diversity and inclusion in Walla Walla, nationally, and internationally since the 1970s,” said Emily Tillotson, assistant professor of social work and sociology. “His 40 years of dedication and service to the goals of social justice and community organizing make him an honorary member of the social work profession.”
School of Theology

2019 graduates

We are pleased to introduce the 2019 graduates of the WWU School of Theology.

**Caitlin Brown**, majors in religion and education

**What will you miss about WWU**: Friends, of course. The theology faculty, staff, and students who have become wonderful mentors and like a second family to me.

**Plans after graduation**: To find a job teaching high school Bible and/or to serve as a chaplain. Further education to receive state certification in history and music, and possibly graduate school.

**Nick Gosney**, majors in biblical languages and theology, minor in history

**What will you miss about WWU**: I will miss the professors and the community of the theology department. The family atmosphere that I’ve enjoyed is something I cherish deeply and will miss going forward.

**Plans after graduation**: I will be working as a pastor in the Oregon Conference after graduating.

**Lindsey Haffner**, majors in English, French, and religion

**What will you miss about WWU**: I will miss the community and fellowship of students and faculty on this campus who have impacted my life so positively during my college experience.

**Mathew Shedd**, major in religion, minor in chemistry

**What will you miss about WWU**: What I will miss most about WWU is the community. This campus is a uniquely inviting and welcoming place where I have experienced the support and love of genuine Christian community. I will forever be grateful for my mentors, teachers, and friends from WWU.

**Plans after graduation**: I will be attending Loma Linda’s School of Medicine after graduation.

**Jordan Tamuleaa**, major in theology, minor in biblical languages

**What will you miss about WWU**: I will miss Circle Church at WWU and the friendships I have made. I have many memories that I will hold close to my heart.

**Plans after graduation**: After graduation I will be working for the Washington Conference as an associate pastor for the Auburn City Church.

**Jonathan Vasquez**, major in religion, minor in history

**What will you miss about WWU**: I will miss the closeness and care that just emanates from the people on campus. From the first moment I stepped on campus, I loved the atmosphere of friendliness and Christian love that I had not seen and felt anywhere else. I will miss the Christian element at WWU that was combined with academic excellence.

**Plans after graduation**: After graduation I plan to take the LSAT and seek admission into law school in 2020. I seek a future ministry to help those in our society who can’t afford legal help. I hope to serve as Jesus did to those who are often neglected and marginalized in society.

**Carla Blum-Johnston**, major in religion, minors in chemistry and biology

**What will you miss about WWU**: After graduation, I will miss our wonderful and warm Walla Walla community the most. This place has become a second home for me!

**Plans after graduation**: I will be going to medical school at Loma Linda University!
New books address Christian relationships with Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus

Paul Dybdahl’s book Before We Call Them Strangers: What Adventists Ought to Know about Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus, released in 2017, will now be offered as three separate books, one on each religion highlighted in the original book.

Each of the three new books has a co-author who worked with Dybdahl, professor of mission and New Testament, on additional content for the books. "My portion of each book introduces the beliefs and practices of each religion, records interviews with two followers of each religion, and then lists some of what I appreciate about each religion," said Dybdahl. "My co-authors are all practitioners—they are actively engaged in ongoing work among people of that religion. Their addition is a section that deals with practical, how-to ideas for engagement and sharing."

The first of the series, Islam: Facts, Fictions, and Familiarities, was written with Gabriela Phillips, coordinator for Adventist-Muslim relations for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, and is currently available for purchase. The second book, which Dybdahl is writing alongside Scott Griswold, director of Reach the World Next Door, is still in progress. It will be titled Buddhism: Stumbling Blocks and Stepping Stones, and is set to be released in June. The final book on Judaism will be released within the year.

Dybdahl hopes these books will improve the religious experiences of the readers. “These individual books are intended as a resource and practical guide for Christians who want to learn about those of other faiths and also engage in meaningful relationships with them,” he said.

Dybdahl’s books are available at AdventSource.org.

CBFM explores ways to integrate biblical studies with concerns facing the church

How can Adventists engage with the questions of today with humility and confidence? Through the Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission at Walla Walla University, the faculty in the School of Theology seek to provide a framework for addressing difficult questions within the context of committed Bible study and application of Scripture.

In their work through the CBFM, each year WWU theology faculty present seminars, lectures, and conferences on a variety of topics throughout the Pacific Northwest. They also produce a weekly spoken online Sabbath School commentary called Good Word. (See page 10 for details about Good Word.)

During the 2018–19 academic year, Dave Thomas, professor of practical theology and apologetics, and Alden Thompson, professor of biblical studies, spoke in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Spokane, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, on topics that included the history of Adventism, the question of compliance, and the doctrine of the Trinity. Titles of their presentations included: “Ancient and Modern Adventism,” “Our Feisty and Deeply Committed Adventist Forebears,” “Adventist Beliefs: From Simple Covenant to a List of 28,” and “The Pilgrim Way.”

Brant Berglin, associate professor of biblical studies, spoke in Moscow, Idaho, and Coos Bay, Oregon, about the book of Revelation.

Church leaders can request a speaker through the CBFM by contacting the WWU School of Theology at (509) 527-2194 or by sending an email to goodword@wallawalla.edu. To learn more about the mission of the CBFM and School of Theology faculty, visit wallawalla.edu/theology.

Scholarships support students in the School of Theology

Students in the School of Theology are deeply grateful for the scholarships that make their education possible. This year, 44 students received scholarships from the funds listed below totaling $46,881. Thank you to our generous alumni and friends for providing these scholarships.

• DeLaine Anderson Memorial Scholarship ($7,386)
• Alice I. Bowden Memorial Scholarship ($3,513)
• Bible Lands Theology Major Scholarship ($1,300)
•ivocational Ministry Scholarship ($6,900)
• Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission Scholarship ($3,285)
• J. Paul Grove Memorial Scholarship ($4,981)
• Paul and Frances Heubach Theology Scholarship ($1,860)
• Oland F. Hubbs Memorial Theology Scholarship ($1,156)
• Mary E. Marker Memorial Theology Scholarship ($5,060)
• Matiko Theology Award ($474)
• Daniel A. Ochs Memorial Scholarship ($456)
• Gayle L. Saxby Memorial Scholarship ($1,027)
• Theology Dean’s Award ($8,632)
• Eva Stratton Vliet and Jess Vliet Scholarship ($851)

If you would like to give to the School of Theology to support one of these scholarships or to create a new scholarship, contact Alumni and Advancement Services by calling (800) 377-2586.
A Good Word

Theology students find meaningful experience in leadership positions

Students from the School of Theology are frequently chosen by their fellow students to fill leadership roles on campus, and this year was no exception. Katie Wagner, junior theology major, served as 2018–19 junior class president, and Emily Ellis, junior theology major, was elected to serve as spiritual vice president for the Associated Students of Walla Walla University during the upcoming academic year.

Both Wagner and Ellis say that a collaborative approach to leadership that is focused on service is essential.

“I have always appreciated understanding, communication, honesty, kindness, and accountability in leadership,” says Wagner. “Those qualities empower people to do their best work either on their own or in a team setting. I appreciate leadership that strives for positive learning experiences and empowers people to work to their best potential.”

Ellis says that she appreciates working collaboratively with a team. “I have found that there is only so much perspective that I have, and I need a team to bounce ideas off of and to get ideas from. Every time a leader takes time to listen to me, I feel important and valued. I hope to do this as a student leader on campus.”

As the student spiritual leader next year, Ellis will focus on helping students know God and form a relationship with him. “WWU creates an incredible spiritual environment that helps people connect to God through programs like vespers and Sabbath morning church services, but the reality is that students are not going to find a church environment like this when they graduate. As a university, we need to find ways for students to create their own relationship with God, apart from programs,” she says.

In their positions of leadership, both Wagner and Ellis are drawing on skills they are learning in their classes in the School of Theology.

“The most important thing I've learned is that leadership is not for the benefit of the leader, it’s for the benefit of the people whom the leader serves,” says Wagner. “In other words, a leadership position isn’t for glorification, it’s the opportunity to serve and empower people.”

As future contexts and needs vary for leadership within the church and the world, Wagner and Ellis are developing skills that will help them maintain a leadership focus on humble, Christ-like service.

Washburn paper addresses analysis of ancient inscriptions

A paper by Jody Washburn, assistant professor of biblical studies, titled “The Family Tomb as an Inscribed Artifact: Toward an Integrative Analysis of the Beit Lei Inscriptions” will be published this year in MAARAV: A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures.

In her master’s and doctoral work at the University of California, Los Angeles, Washburn studied a variety of Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions. Her interest in this area led to studies of an inscription from Khirbet Beit Lei that was in storage at the Israel Museum. Her subsequent work involved taking new photographs of 12 inscriptions that had been removed from a tomb at Beit Lei and creating a schematic of how the inscriptions would have appeared in the tomb prior to removal. This became the basis for her dissertation research.

Washburn’s article in MAARAV notes a tendency in academic studies of ancient inscriptions to get so wrapped up in translating an inscription that the context of the inscription is minimized or overlooked. “Bringing together the content and the setting,” explains Washburn, “helps to add nuance to the various suggestions that have been made regarding who might have inscribed the images and texts found on the tomb walls at Beit Lei and what they may have been seeking to accomplish by writing and drawing in the family tomb.”

Reflecting on the connection between her research and her teaching, Washburn says her research on integrative approaches to ancient inscriptions has pushed her to widen her lens and wrestle with how different kinds of data might be related. This informs her teaching in the sense that one of her goals in every class is to challenge students to consider specific texts, archaeological artifacts, and even theological arguments, in their wider contexts.

The Global Reach of the ‘Good Word’ Broadcast

Good Word is a weekly radio program that serves as a supplement to the Seventh-day Adventist adult Sabbath School quarterly with content provided by professors in the WWU School of Theology. The program can be accessed online at wallawalla.edu/goodword.
Since 2012, the number of women enrolled with majors in theology or biblical studies has doubled in the Walla Walla University School of Theology.

“I am convinced that this increase is entirely a ‘God thing,’” said Carl Cosaert, dean of the School of Theology. “2012 was the year our denomination began its Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) and the debate about whether the world church should allow women to serve as ordained pastors.”

“While the majority of the TOSC participants ultimately were in favor of allowing women to be ordained, the General Conference in 2015 voted against allowing any of the world divisions to ordain women,” said Cosaert. “In light of this disappointing conclusion, I would have assumed we would have seen a decline in the number of women becoming majors within the School of Theology. But the opposite has happened—and I couldn’t be happier.”

**Diverse calls to ministry**

Among recent graduates is Natashia (Walde) McVay, a 2011 graduate with a major in theology and minor in biblical languages, who the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Moscow (Idaho) has hired to serve as their associate pastor.

“It is a true fulfillment of my dreams to be able to share Jesus as a career,” said McVay. “There isn’t a day I wake up and dread my job, even on the hard days. It is genuinely what I have felt called to since a child, to work for Jesus as a pastor. I consider it a privilege and honor to serve the Lord in this way.”

Natalie Dorland, a 2016 graduate with a major in theology and minor in biblical languages, recently had the 2018 daily devotional book for teens published by Pacific Press.

“Here I Am was a miracle that God placed in my life before I realized I needed it! I wrote that book while going through some of the hardest months of my life. But because I was going through a lot of pain, I could relate well to some of the questions youth in my church were asking, so ideas for the book were generated greatly through real topics that I was discussing with different youth in my church,” said Dorland. She wrote the book with mentoring from Seth Pierce, pastor for the Puyallup (Washington) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dorland is currently studying at the seminary at Andrews University to obtain a master of divinity degree. “I’m working on writing a few articles with Dr. Joseph Kidder, hopefully to be published soon, as well as working with him and Dr. Kenley Hall on a research project about young adults in Adventism,” she said. She is looking forward to returning to Washington state to work as a pastor in the Washington Conference following the completion of her graduate degree.

Acacia Chan, a 2016 honors program graduate with a major in biblical languages and minor in psychology, would like to someday teach at the university level.

“After graduating with my master of arts in religion degree from Yale Divinity School, I am pursuing my doctor of philosophy degree in religious studies with a concentration in religions of the ancient Mediterranean at the University of Texas at Austin,” said Chan. “My work primarily focuses on Christianity, but I also study Judaism and Greco-Roman religions.”

“Ever since my sophomore year at WWU, when I taught my first Greek class as a day-long substitute for Professor Brant Berglin, I’ve wanted to be a university professor who connects modern readers with ancient texts. My favorite teachers have brought a contagious enthusiasm for their subjects into the classroom, and I’d like to think that I can do the same for my students,” said Chan.

From pastoral work to chaplaincy to teaching, doors are opening for women. “It isn’t that women only do chaplaincy, or women only do elementary or secondary teaching, they have been getting calls as pastors,” said Cosaert. “We’ve been really blessed as a department, with our women graduates, that they’ve been hired in all kinds of fields. God is clearly moving in the hearts of women—calling them to ministry. And what is even more encouraging is that these women are getting hired!”

“God is clearly moving in the hearts of women—calling them to ministry.”

—Carl Cosaert