A Word from the Dean

It falls to me as a privilege, for the fifteenth time, to write a Word from the Dean for those of you who receive the WWU School of Theology newsletter. As I write, several things are on my mind as worthy of notice.

First of all, we have a long-time, very accomplished faculty member retiring. You will find an article about Darold Bigger elsewhere in this newsletter, but I would like to congratulate him for his excellence in thought and generosity in service. He has been a very good colleague and a teacher whose work has been much appreciated. It will not be easy to fill in the gaps as he retires. I, and my colleagues, wish him God's blessing as he transitions into retirement.

The focus of another article is the arrival of Jody Washburn, a WWU School of Theology graduate who is finishing her Ph.D. in Old Testament and Hebrew studies. She will be joining us as the first tenure-track female faculty in the department in a very long time. I have been hoping since I became Dean in 2001 that we would have a full-time female faculty in our midst, so Jody's arrival is the fulfillment of that hope. I believe she will bring some very good teaching and scholarship to the School of Theology.

At the point of this writing, a faculty search is underway for Darold Bigger’s position. I anticipate another competent full-time faculty addition to our group as that search concludes.

I must also comment about the awards won this year by two faculty, Brant Berglin and Paul Dybdahl (read more on pg. 6). I would note that teaching awards have been won by almost all of the faculty in the School of Theology. I think it is significant that in a school that is religiously oriented, some of the best teachers on the campus are found in the department most directly responsible for the teaching and propagation of religion. It is hard to think of a better circumstance for those who cherish religion than to repeatedly see that those teaching religion are acknowledged to be among the most appreciated faculty on the campus. I heartily congratulate Paul and Brant. They are excellent teachers and treasured colleagues.

In looking back over this past year, I also rejoice that the previous allegations of “spiritual formation,” while never having any substance at all on this campus, seem now to have subsided. I am happy to tell you that, if you come to the campus and ask students about “spiritual formation,” they chuckle, saying, “We have heard about that but have never seen or experienced it here.” Truth is, inappropriate spiritual formation has never been part of the life of WWU. It has lived only as a collection of unsubstantiated allegations on the internet and elsewhere. I can assure you that spirituality in the best and most Christ-centered sense exists here in the School of Theology.

This year’s graduates also come to mind. What a fine (and large) group of graduates we have this year—19 of them! The large class has made hiring a bit of a challenge, but it has been gratifying to see how many have been hired and more who will be in the coming months. I am confident these young men and women will go out to find a place in the vineyard of the Lord to make sustained and good contributions. Pray for them, and help the remaining graduates find a place to work if you can have that influence.

The last thing I want to say here is a word of thanks—thanks to those who pray for us, to those who support us with their efforts and words, and to those who submit donations to the School of Theology. It is simply more costly for students to go to college now than it was in days past, so we are particularly grateful for the scholarship donations. They make a big difference to students. If you happen to have some money you are thinking of putting to a good cause, I would invite you to consider the School of Theology. I continue to dream of significant scholarship monies in the multiple thousands of dollars (not one or two thousand but five thousand or more) for it would help significantly to defray the high cost of college, which is a real challenge for some students. Thank you to all of you for your support, in whatever form, for Adventist Christian education.

David Thomas

David Thomas, Dean
Practical Theology/ Apologetics

Brant Berglin
New Testament/Greek

Darold Bigger
Pastoral Administration

Susan Bungard
New Testament Teaching

Carl Cosaert
Early Christianity/ New Testament

Paul Dybdahl
Missions/New Testament

Mathilde Frey
Old Testament/Hebrew

Pedrito Maynard-Reid
Ethics/New Testament

Alden Thompson
Old Testament/ Adventist History
Theology Majors in Student Leadership

Theology or religion majors often win an elected position in campus student leadership, called the Associated Students of Walla Walla University (ASWWU). In 2015–16, however, all three of the major leadership positions were held by theology students: President Randy Folkenberg, Executive Vice President Derek Glatts, and Spiritual Vice President Stephen Farr.

As president, Randy supervised 125-30 student workers in various departments such as the Collegian, Global Service, spiritual life, outdoor activities, and student senate. The role of the ASWWU president is to vision-cast, rally his or her cabinet around shared goals, and collaborate with students and employees on projects. Working with people and recognizing their differences has helped prepare Randy for his upcoming work in the Oregon conference as a pastor in the fall of 2016. In addition to being ASWWU president, Randy was enrolled in the pastor-mentoring program and full-time coursework, planned a wedding with his fiancé, and participated in intramural sports and other campus activities throughout the year.

WWU students also have their own Senate, chaired this year by the ASWWU executive vice president, Derek Glatts. Leadership skills are required to keep the 26-member Senate running smoothly. Derek stated that he is proud to be part of a student organization giving students a voice in how university funds are spent for improvement in campus and student life. Derek adds that sitting in meetings with the university president, John McVay, naturally makes you feel like your input is important! Because of Derek's experience in his ASWWU administrative role, he is leaning toward one-on-one ministry such as chaplaincy after he graduates in 2017.

Already notable for his prayer initiatives through Campus Ministries, Stephen Farr served as the spiritual vice president this year, putting him in perhaps the most influential student role for setting the spiritual direction of the university. Stephen, who is known for his boundless energy, organized several weeks of prayer and weekends of worship to keep students focused on God's grace and the role of the Adventist church. The spiritual VP also coordinates a spring concert, and this year Stephen invited Phil Wickham, whose music draws his audience into praising the God of Grace through His Son. Beginning in the summer of 2016, Stephen will serve in ministry as a pastor for the Upper Columbia Conference.

These three theology students who served as ASWWU leaders shared a deep desire this year for Christian ideals to permeate student activities. They each hope to impact their friends and other students for Jesus Christ and make a broader impact for the Kingdom of God when they leave WWU.
Dr. Paul Dybdahl was awarded the honor of presenting the 2016–2017 Distinguished Faculty Lecture for Walla Walla University, an event open to the campus and community. Since the lectures began in 1994, Dr. Dybdahl is the fifth member of the School of Theology to be selected for this distinction. The topic for Dybdahl’s lecture in February of 2016 will pertain to world religions, which is a significant area of study for him. Dr. Dybdahl began teaching at WWU in 2001, and has previously won the annual WWU advising award as well as a teaching award.

Timothy Oliver, a graduating senior in theology, won the grand prize for his song “Dangerous” in a Seventh-day Adventist worship writing competition called InSpire. Timothy won the top prize out of 64 other submissions. He said that the song is about living a “dangerous” life for God, which is not possible without His help. Timothy has been playing music since he was 7 years old and believes he expresses himself best through music and loves to share its beauty with others.

Brant Berglin, a 1995 graduate of the WWU School of Theology, was invited to teach at WWU in January of 2013 as an assistant professor of New Testament and biblical languages. After just three years of teaching, Professor Berglin received the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. As a professor, Berglin loves to connect students to the relevance of the Bible. He appreciates seeing students gain a greater understanding and realization of the love of Jesus. Professor Berglin is currently finishing his dissertation in a narrative study of the book of Revelation.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

Psalms 1:1-2
Acacia CHAN

PLANS: Pursuing a master of arts in religion degree at Yale Divinity School.

WWU MEMORY: My connection with the professors and substitute-teaching Greek class both clarified my career path. Also, the Bible Lands Study Tour in 2015 continues to enrich my study of Scripture.

Zlatko BENKO

PLANS: Seeking employment in ministry.

WWU MEMORY: It was so rewarding to work in Campus Ministries with Chaplain Paddy and minister to the campus through events and worships.

Shintell IZQUIERDO

PLANS: Seeking employment in ministry.

WWU MEMORY: My favorite thing about WWU, and the reason I came here, is because of the opportunities for student leadership.

Anthony LYDER

PLANS: Seeking God’s will for employment in pastoral ministry.

WWU MEMORY: Walla Walla is memorable to me because it provided me with opportunities to develop as a person while helping me better know my Creator.

Zach PARKS

PLANS: Seeking employment in ministry.

WWU MEMORY: The people and experiences here—I will miss them both.

Benjamin STEENFOTT

PLANS: Seeking employment in ministry.

WWU MEMORY: The people and experiences here—I will miss them both.

Eddy DARISME

PLANS: Employed as a chaplain at Livingstone Academy in Oregon.

WWU MEMORY: The sense of community in the School of Theology. My life has been profoundly impacted by their ministry, teaching, and mentorship. I came calling them my professors, but I leave calling them my friends.

Natalie DORLAND

PLANS: Getting married! Employed by the Oregon Conference.

WWU MEMORY: The diverse opportunities at WWU for dialogue about a wide range of issues with a wide range of viewpoints.

Jon JENNETTE

PLANS: Getting married! Employed by the Oregon Conference.

WWU MEMORY: The people. Walla Walla is a place that feels like home. The people of Walla Walla are now my family.

Jonathan STEPHAN

PLANS: Getting married! Serving as a pastoral intern in the Oregon Conference.

WWU MEMORY: Besides meeting my fiancé, my experience as ASWWU president. I have been blessed to work with amazing people and I will treasure them and the lessons I learned.

Stephen FARR

PLANS: Getting married! Serving as the associate pastor at the Riverview SDA church in Pasco, Wash.

WWU MEMORY: The people. Walla Walla is a place that feels like home. The people of Walla Walla are now my family.

Randy FOLKENBERG

PLANS: Getting married! Serving as the associate pastor at the Riverview SDA church in Pasco, Wash.

WWU MEMORY: Besides meeting my fiancé, my experience as ASWWU president. I have been blessed to work with amazing people and I will treasure them and the lessons I learned.
Did you know that you can listen to members of the School of Theology discuss the Sabbath School lesson each week? Are you aware that you could also have a free copy of a companion discussion guide? This is all made possible through the School of Theology media outreach called Good Word. Here are some FAQs that you may find helpful.

**What is Good Word?** Good Word is a weekly radio program that serves as a supplement to the Seventh-day Adventist Adult Sabbath School Quarterly. The content of the program is provided by professors in the WWU School of Theology and it is recorded and produced by Positive Life Radio (KGTS 91.3).

**Who listens to the program?** People from all around the world listen to the program each week. In fact, when theology faculty travel, one of the most frequent greetings they receive is, “Oh, you’re from Walla Walla. I listen to you on Good Word!” Some Sabbath School teachers access the program as they prepare to teach the lesson.

**What is the format of Good Word?** Good Word is a 13-minute recorded conversation between a theology professor and two discussion partners, who are most often School of Theology colleagues. The goal of the interchange is to spark new ideas and deepen reflection on the lesson study topic for that week.

**What other resources are provided, and how would I access Good Word?** In addition to the audio recording, a written discussion guide is available for each week’s lesson. The archived discussion recordings and the written guides are available free on the School of Theology webpage at wallawalla.edu/academics/departments/theology/goodword. Podcasts are available through iTunes, and it is also possible to place an order for cassettes or CDs of the program, along with the accompanying study guide.
Washburn Joins School of Theology in Fall of 2016

On the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles, Jody Washburn is in the final stages of research and writing for her doctoral dissertation: “Iron Age Cave Inscriptions from the Southern Shephelah: An Integrative Study of the Beit Lei and el-Qôm Inscriptions.”

On any given day, you might find Washburn hiking in the hills near her home; traveling to an archaeological excavation site in Israel; soaking up the California sun with her 8-month-old daughter, Danielle, and her husband of 10 years, Chad; giving a piano lesson; or teaching a class at UCLA on women in the ancient world. This summer, Washburn and her family will pack up their belongings and move to the Walla Walla Valley, where she will become the newest faculty member in the Walla Walla University School of Theology.

Washburn says, “There are many reasons I am very much looking forward to living and working in Walla Walla. The first that comes to mind is the many opportunities I will have to have tea parties with my little nieces.”

While family connections in Walla Walla are a draw for Washburn, she says she is also “humbled beyond words by the opportunity to teach full-time. The times I have spent teaching have been the times when I have felt most alive, and I have given considerable thought to how to design courses and present material in a way that will be meaningful to college-age students.”

Next year at WWU, Washburn will teach general studies and Old Testament courses. She will be the first female tenure-track faculty member in the School of Theology since Lucille Knapp retired in the late 1980s. Of the current 45 majors in the School of Theology, 11 are women. Washburn, who graduated summa cum laude from WWU in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in theology, says, “I’ve always had male and female mentors who encouraged me and supported me, and I never thought about not having a female theology professor.” Her main female mentors at that time were Ruby Stafford at the Village Church and Lois Blackwelder, member care pastor at the University Church, who worked in the WWU Chaplain’s Office when Washburn was an undergraduate student. “I’m so grateful. In all of my ministry experience, I’ve always had mentors—male and female—who gave me opportunities beyond my expertise and believed in me,” Washburn says.

Washburn’s research interests include biblical archaeology, wisdom literature, blessings and curses in the ancient Near East, and women of influence in the ancient world. Her dissertation “is a multi-disciplinary study of some Hebrew inscriptions that were found in three hewn burial caves in Israel within the area that belonged to ancient Judah,” she says. “The inscriptions mention Yahweh and the ‘God of Jerusalem’ and they also include short prayers and some curse and blessing phrases. The inscriptions date to the Iron II B period, somewhere between the time of Hezekiah and the end of the Judean monarchy when Babylon invaded.”

Washburn also has master’s degrees in religious education–family life education and in religion–Hebrew Bible from Andrews University, a master’s degree in ancient Near Eastern languages and cultures from UCLA, and a candidate in philosophy degree in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from UCLA.
A Good Word

Busy days ahead
While Bigger won’t spend as many hours as usual on campus starting in August, he may not even really notice that he retired.

“I have several speaking appointments for next year. There are some places we’d like to see, so we’ll do some traveling. I’ll do some counseling for people in the community. There are some writing projects I want to work on. I’ll be finishing a couple of reports on research that we’ve done. And I will be of help to Barbara around home,” says Bigger.

That sounds like plenty, but there’s more.

In 2004, Bigger retired as a Rear Admiral in the United States Navy. After retirement from WWU, he will remain involved with projects related to his military service. He is part of a support team for Returning Warrior Workshops, a congressionally funded part of the Yellow Ribbon Program, which assists service members returning from the Middle East with transition back to the states. During the upcoming year, his work with that program will take him to Chicago, Seattle, and Philadelphia. He will also continue volunteer work with the national oversight organization Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, and with Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.

“I think it’s crucial for religiously grounded people to maintain contact with the military in order to support high values and careful thought about how we use that kind of strength,” he says.

Day-to-day journey
“When I retire, we will have been in Walla Walla for 36 years,” says Bigger. “Being part of this family for so long certainly stands out. This is a great place.” Bigger’s connections to the Walla Walla community include 35 years with Rotary Club and an “immensely large number of friends without the label of Adventist who are a very large part of our lives here,” he says. “Getting acquainted with those people has been wonderful.”

When asked about his legacy at WWU, Bigger says he isn’t really comfortable with that word. “Each day, I just think about what needs to be done today. It’s just been a delightful day-to-day journey celebrating the opportunities we have to do what God asks.”

“While you can plan well, prepare yourself, and equip yourself well, you can’t outguess God. So it is a day-to-day thing,” he says. “A whole series of miraculous, surprising things have lead us to where we are. It’s with that same attitude that I face what happens after August 1.”

Darold Bigger Retirement

Darold Bigger, longtime faculty member in the Walla Walla University School of Theology and School of Social Work and former University Church pastor, will retire this August. Most recently, Bigger has taught half-time in the School of Theology and worked half-time as an advisor and assistant to WWU President John McVay.

Bigger was an associate pastor at the La Sierra University Church, when in 1980 he and his wife, Barbara, accepted a call to pastor at the Walla Walla University Church. “We pastored at the University Church for over 12 years,” says Bigger, “and in many ways during that time we felt like we were part of the campus. We were welcomed to meetings, and I taught a class each quarter even while I was pastor.”

Bigger began teaching full-time at the university in 1992. Through the years he has taught classes in the ministry of Jesus, church leadership, crisis ministry, chaplaincy, and pastoral counseling for theology majors, as well as general studies classes in Christian spirituality and discipleship, forgiveness, interpersonal relationships, and marriage and family.

He has also taught a class for non-Adventist students titled “Introduction to Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs and Practices.” “It’s a great way to get acquainted with some of our non-Adventist students,” he says. “When people exposed to this Adventist community can see the advantages of being part of this church family, that’s about as exciting as it gets for me.”