One of the features of life in an academic institution is that the years roll by with a remarkable degree of predictability. For example, I can, all things remaining equal, tell you what I will be doing at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and also Wednesday afternoons between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m., as well as Thursday from 3 to 5 p.m. Some of these times relate to classes now scheduled, while others have to do with regular meetings of various kinds. This predictability makes the years roll by fairly quickly. Those of us who teach are surprised at how rapidly the school year passes! And the certain sameness from year to year makes it challenging to separate one year from another, except for the departure of our graduates, of course.

At this point, I can tell you we have had another very good year. For a number of reasons, Walla Walla University is flying high at present, with a good academic atmosphere, a good spiritual atmosphere, and a strong sense of togetherness—of community. It has been a great and joyous privilege to be able to spend significant time interacting with young adults. I can also tell you that students are in good, competent, and dedicated hands when it comes to religion and theology classes.

For some anomalous collection of reasons, we have a very small graduating class this year, only five students, three of whom are theology majors, two of whom are religion majors. The very good news is that they have all been offered employment of some kind, four of them in pastoral roles, one as an assistant dean. It is gratifying to see our graduates in demand and seeing past graduates doing well.

This year we have two new faculty, Mathilde Frey and Jodi Washburn, both of whom have an emphasis in Old Testament times. They are both adding nicely to our efforts.

I am also able to tell you that, once again, teachers in the School of Theology have been given awards for their work and teaching. What is most gratifying to me is that student input is a major component of some of the awards. In a significant way, this student component has caused awards to be given more than once to Paul Dybdahl—this year a teaching award. We are very blessed to have him in our midst. The Distinguished Faculty Lecture award, given to Pedrito Maynard-Reid this year, is one based on very broad criteria that consider the contribution a faculty member makes to the institution. I am very pleased this has come to him as he has been doing much for WWU for a long time now.

I conclude my remarks here by noting that we have once again been living with miracle stories this year. We have several students who are here only by the actions of God. I never cease to marvel over how Providence works to bring circumstances together to enable students to be present on our campus. Many times those providences involve generous people who feel impressed to be of help. To you, and to God, we give thanks.

David Thomas

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Words from Scripture

“But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

I Timothy 6:11–12, NRSV

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WWU School of Theology faculty

David Thomas, dean
Practical theology/apologetics

Mathilde Frey
Old Testament/Hebrew

Brant Berglin
New Testament/Greek

Pedrito Maynard-Reid
Biblical studies/missiology

Susan Bungard
New Testament teaching

Alden Thompson
Old Testament/Adventist history

Carl Cosaert
Early Christianity/New Testament

Jody Washburn
Old Testament/Hebrew

Paul Dybdahl
Mission/New Testament
Theology Club activities foster fellowship and leadership skills

The Theology Club is just one of the ways that students become well-acquainted with School of Theology faculty and grow to appreciate those friendships. With student leadership and a faculty sponsor, the Theology Club holds several events each quarter. Most club members are theology and religion majors, but all students are welcome to join.

Events include seasonal dinners for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and Cinco de Mayo, as well as quarterly Friday night meals at faculty homes. The club also helps plan the Theology Retreat, which takes place each October. During the retreat, theology majors, faculty, and friends stay in mountain cabins and spend a weekend of worship together. All of these events give faculty and students the opportunity to spend quality time in fellowship.

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, nearly 40 students received scholarships. Thank you to our generous alumni and friends for the following scholarships awarded in April 2017!

- DeLaine Anderson Memorial Scholarship ($5,600)
- Alice I. Bowden Memorial Scholarship ($3,700)
- Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission Scholarship ($3,100)
- Paul and Frances Heubach Memorial Scholarship ($2,900)
- Oland F. Hubbs Memorial Scholarship ($1,300)
- Mary E. Marker Memorial Scholarship ($4,600)
- Matiko Award ($500)
- Daniel A. Ochs Memorial Scholarship ($500)
- Gayle L. Saxby Memorial Scholarship ($1,100)
- Eva Stratton Vliet and Jess Vliet Scholarship ($800)
- Theology Student Aid Dean’s Award ($6,800)
- J. Paul Grove Memorial Scholarship ($2,600)
- Bible Lands Theology Major Scholarships ($3,400)

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.

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).

Dybdahl recognized for outstanding teaching

Paul Dybdahl, professor of mission and New Testament, is the 2017 recipient of the C. Michael and DeLona Lang Bell Outstanding Teaching Award. This award is presented each year to a WWU faculty member who excels in his or her area of discipline and is widely recognized as an outstanding teacher. This person is exemplary in integrating faith with rigorous thought and has consistently high evaluation rankings. The award recipient is selected by seniors and recent graduates.

Maynard-Reid to speak for Distinguished Faculty Lecture

Pedrito Maynard-Reid, professor of biblical studies and missiology, will speak for the 2017 WWU Distinguished Faculty Lecture. This annual lecture is presented by a faculty member who is recognized for excellence in leadership, teaching, and scholarship, as well as involvement in governance, church, and community service. Maynard-Reid has taught at WWU since 1990. He is also WWU assistant to the president for diversity.
Cosaert named president of Adventist Theological Society

Carl Cosaert, professor of biblical studies, was named president of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) in November 2016 following a two-year term as president-elect. He will serve two years as president.

“What interested me in helping out with ATS is their global outreach to the world church,” says Cosaert. “I’ve traveled for ATS internationally and have seen the blessing this organization has been in helping to educate church leaders as they grow in their understanding of the biblical basis of our Adventist beliefs.”

The ATS regularly touches Adventist leaders, pastors, theologians, and lay people with the power and depth of God’s Word. ATS resources are available by request for church leaders and seminaries and are available at ATSacademy.org.

In 2014, Cosaert also completed a term as president of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. He is the first individual to serve as the president of both societies.

Frey joins the faculty of the School of Theology

Mathilde Frey, associate professor of biblical studies, joined the School of Theology last July after teaching for a year on a contract basis. Frey’s area of expertise is Old Testament studies, specifically Pentateuch and Hebrew. She has also taught Daniel and Jeremiah, Hebrew Prophets, and Christian Beliefs, and honors program classes, such as Bible and Its Environments.

Frey previously taught at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines and has served as editor for the Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary and assistant editor of Shabbat Shalom at Andrews University. She has been a square supervisor for the archaeological excavation site at Tall Jalul, Jordan, has lead a Waldensian study tour, and has been a pastor and youth pastor at the Seventh-day Adventist Church Freiburg in Germany. She has made presentations and published works covering a range of topics, including “Sabbath in Egypt? An Examination of Exodus 5,” “Sanctuary in the Wilderness: Replica of the Original,” and “The Woodgatherer’s Sabbath: A Literary Study of Numbers 15:32-36.”

“I consider it a great privilege to work with the faculty of the School of Theology at WWU,” says Frey. “My colleagues’ dedication, love, and concern for the students of WWU is exemplary. There is a bonding between faculty and students that is just beautiful and inspiring.”

Frey was born in Romania and has both German and United States permanent residency. She has a bachelor’s degree in theology from Seminar Marienhöhe, Darmstadt, Germany; a master of divinity degree equivalency from Andrews University; and a doctorate in religion from Andrews University.

“I love to travel, read good books, cook and bake, and spend time with my family and friends,” she says. “Together with my husband, Marcus, and our daughters, Delia and Chiara, we plan to further explore the Walla Walla Valley and beyond.”

Berglin presentations highlight eschatology in the Old Testament

Brant Berglin, assistant professor of biblical studies, was the main presenter at the Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission theology seminar in February at the Sunnyside Adventist Church in Portland, Oregon.

The CBFM is an outreach program run by the Walla Walla University School of Theology that ministers to Seventh-day Adventist churches particularly in the Pacific Northwest. The program focuses on relating Scripture to concerns of the church through seminars, speaking appointments, and Bible commentaries. “Most importantly, to me it’s sharing Jesus in a real way,” says Berglin.

Berglin gave two presentations during the weekend. The first, “The End from the Beginning: Understanding Eschatology in the Old Testament,” highlighted the Old Testament view of the end times; the second, “Building on the Past: Reading Revelation in Light of the Old Testament,” focused on the relationship between Revelation, the Old Testament, and the end times.

“My hope is that the audience left understanding the unity of the overall message of God in relation to the end of time,” says Berglin. “God has a plan and purpose for how He wants things to turn out in the world. He gives us increasing understanding of this throughout the Bible.”

Other presenters at the seminar included Alden Thompson, professor of biblical studies, who preached on Sabbath morning, and Dave Thomas, dean of the School of Theology and professor of practical theology and apologetics, who spoke for Sabbath vespers.

“I think Adventists really hunger for more about eschatology, Daniel, and Revelation,” says Berglin. “I would love to do another seminar, whether it is at Sunnyside again or elsewhere.”

Berglin has been a professor at WWU since 2013. He holds a bachelor’s degree in theology from WWU and a master of divinity degree from Andrews University. He is currently completing his doctoral dissertation from Andrews University.
A Good Word

School of Theology

2017 graduates

Evan Davies, theology major

Ministry during college: I have mostly been involved with High Five youth group at the Walla Walla University Church while attending WWU and also spent my junior year being an intern at the WWU church.

Future plans: My plans for the future include getting married, pastoring in the Oregon Conference, continuing with school, and hopefully winning a tennis tournament some time in my life!

Saying farewell: I will miss my professors and the classes that they have taught.

Chris DeBruin, theology major

Ministry during college: I am currently serving as the student pastor at Eastgate SDA church. This has been a tremendous blessing. I also worked for Campus Ministries, led the Tuesday evening Heubach worship, and worked for ASWWU in multiple capacities as a senator and as a team member of ASWWU Social.

Future plans: After graduation, I will be the lead pastor of a three-district church in North Dakota. I would also like to have the opportunity to enter the university once more as a faculty member, teaching in the areas of systematic theology, New Testament, and church history.

Saying farewell: I will miss everything—the beautiful campus, the wonderful people. I’m deeply saddened that I have to leave. I regret not having been here since my freshman year. WWU has crawled into my heart, and I am certain that I will always miss it.

Rachel Rogers, religion major

Ministry during college: I helped with a youth group held on campus for seventh and eighth graders. I also helped with the campus-led evangelistic meetings called InTents every year I was here. I spoke a few times for worships held around campus and led music for smaller events.

Future plans: For the future I will be working at a summer camp, Ida Haven, as a counselor for the third year and then will be assistant dean at Auburn Academy next year and am super excited about that. I love working with people one-on-one and would love to be a head dean someday. I also plan on getting married and having a family. I want to travel around and explore the world.

Michael Smith, religion major

Ministry during college: I have been at the Walla Walla University Church for six years helping in the High Five and FaceOff programs and teaching youth Sabbath School, and I did my pastoral mentorship there also. I went on an Upper Columbia Conference youth mission trip to Guatemala. I worked at Camp MiVoden for the past six summers. In addition to work with Campus Ministries, I also did an internship at WWVA in 2016 with the school counselor.

Future plans: I will be the assistant director at Camp MiVoden this summer. Following that, I have accepted a call to the Spokane Valley Church. I hope to empower people to share the gospel. I would like to see the growth and development of the church be such that pastors are not the only ones in the business of ministry but that everyone is using their gifts to share the gospel.

Saying farewell: What I will miss the most is learning from the theology faculty. I will also miss the theology retreats and other department socials.

Jordan Stephan, theology major

Ministry during college: While here, I’ve been able to work with ASWWU, Campus Ministries, Circle Church, and the Milton-Freewater Church for my pastoral mentorship. That last job gave me the most opportunities for experience and leadership, but I’ve been blessed to have a wide range of experience from opportunities on campus.

Future plans: I will be associate pastor at the Kirkland SDA Church starting in July, where I will get to emphasize work with youth as I continue to grow as a person and a pastor.

Saying farewell: I will always have a Walla Walla-sized hole in my heart. I will miss the worship opportunities, the social events, the many time-intensive construction projects, The Longest Table, making videos, and explaining the rental terms to customers at the bookstore. But it is certain that what I will miss most are the hundreds of peers who are eager to learn, grow, laugh, and worship.

We’re pleased to introduce the 2017 graduates from the WWU School of Theology.
A Good Word

Dybdahl lecture explores Adventist relationship to world religions

Paul Dybdahl, professor of mission and New Testament, spoke for the Walla Walla University Distinguished Faculty Lecture in February. In his lecture, titled "Barricade or Bridges: Adventism and the World Religions," Dybdahl explored the question of how Seventh-day Adventism should relate to other religions—specifically Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. "A bridge is about giving and receiving," explained Dybdahl in his lecture. "If we are only about barricades, we won't see people, and we won't see any bridges either."

The DFL is an annual lecture held at WWU since 1993. The speaker is selected from the WWU faculty and is invited to speak on a topic related to her or his academic field. Speakers must have a reputation for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service to the community and the church.

Dybdahl's DFL presentation relates closely to the focus of his new book, Before We Call Them Strangers: What Adventists Ought

“We don’t need to be afraid. If we listen, we can be blessed, and though we are different, there is much that we share.”

to Know about Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. In his book, Dybdahl suggests that learning about other religions shouldn't scare us, but should actually strengthen us in our walk with Jesus. “I think we tend to be afraid of people who are not of our religion,” says Dybdahl. “We don't need to be afraid. If we listen, we can be blessed, and though we are different, there is much that we share.”

During two sabbaticals, Dybdahl made several trips throughout the Northwest to interview practitioners of the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist faiths. “People love to talk about what they believe,” he says. “I feel like writing this book has made me more thankful for my religious heritage,” he says. “It has helped me to see people instead of religious labels, and it has helped me to reconnect with things in the Bible that I may have overlooked.”

Dybdahl was inspired to write his book after teaching the World Religions class at WWU. “I realized talking respectfully about other religions didn’t make students want to convert to a different religion,” he says. “Instead, it challenged them to be more faithful in their own spiritual journeys.” Dybdahl also was inspired by George Vandeman, longtime director of the It Is Written television series. In one of his books, What I Like About—, Vandeman looked at different religious groups and highlighted certain aspects he appreciated about each religion.

“I hope people who read the book will be more open to conversations with those of other faiths, and I hope their walk with Jesus will be strengthened,” says Dybdahl. “God so loved the world. He cares about other people and what they believe, and we should too.”

Dybdahl has been a professor in the WWU School of Theology for 16 years. He has a bachelor's degree in theology from WWU, a master of divinity degree from Andrews University, and doctorate in missiology from Andrews University. Before We Call Them Strangers: What Adventists Ought to Know about Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus is available for purchase online at AdventSource.org. To watch Dybdahl’s lecture, visit wallawalla.edu/DFL.
I\n
n March 2016, Troy Wallace, junior biblical languages and theology double major, hit the streets of Portland with nothing more than a backpack and jacket. Wallace’s curiosity about poverty had grown so he had decided the best way to understand poverty was to experience homelessness firsthand for a weekend.

“I began to learn about prejudices by trying to be homeless,” says Wallace. “When I walked down the street, people would take the long way around to not acknowledge me. I quickly realized homeless people face a lot of alienation and dismissal.”

On his return to Walla Walla University, Wallace received a class assignment to start a new ministry. With his newly developed sympathy for homelessness and the dehumanization that comes with it, Wallace decided his ministry would somehow involve Walla Walla’s homeless population. He began visiting Tent City, a homeless encampment near Veterans Memorial Golf Course in Walla Walla, with food in hand and a willingness to engage in conversation and build new friendships.

Every Sunday, Wallace, together with WWU faculty and other students, provides a potluck and music for the Tent City community. “After forming relationships with the people there, I realized they really like music,” he says. “So I began to bring students with me who play the guitar and sing.” Wallace also invites art students to visit the community and create art work with them.

Hearing about Wallace’s homeless ministry inspired several organizations and people to become involved. ASWWU provides financial support, while Jody Washburn, assistant professor of biblical studies, encourages her students to contribute to Sunday potlucks. “Dr. Washburn keeps up with me and is a big part of this ministry,” says Wallace. “She brings her baby, which gives so much joy to the homeless population.”

Walla Walla’s Alliance for the Homeless, an organization that strives to better the conditions for the homeless population in the area, helped organize Tent City. The organization voices the needs of the homeless, and according to Wallace, appoints responsible homeless leaders to help structure their community and to keep it clean.

“This ministry started out as learning for me, and then it turned into filling a need,” says Wallace. “Now I feel like every time I visit with the homeless population, they preach a sermon to me. The most important thing I’ve taken away from this is that they are human beings with the same needs, dreams, hopes, and problems as me. Their conditions are just different.”

Wallace hopes to find more opportunities for WWU students and faculty to get involved so they may be able to see the homeless population with a new perspective.

“Now I feel like every time I visit with the homeless population, they preach a sermon to me.”
WWU President John McVay gave the Sabbath sermon for the group’s worship service in Village Hall. McVay and his wife, Pam, also hosted a reception on Sabbath evening. Pam McVay, with the help of Heather Huether, showed wonderful hospitality to the attendees through meals, music, and beautiful décor. One attendee from Southern California commented that this was his first visit to Walla Walla, and he was immediately impressed with the warmth and friendliness on the WWU campus.

The WCRTC is an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and a time to encourage camaraderie among those who teach religion in higher education. It is also an opportunity to consider the salvific consequences of this teaching and to support each other in the growth of Christ in the lives of students, within our institutions, and through the wider influence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

WWU School of Theology hosts West Coast Religion Teachers Conference

The WWU School of Theology had the privilege of hosting the 45th session of the West Coast Religion Teachers Conference (WCRTC) April 7–9. More than 20 religion faculty from Loma Linda University, La Sierra University, Pacific Union College, and Burman University met to share in fellowship and worship and to engage in academic dialogue on topics relevant to religion teaching and church life.

Among faculty present were a few pioneers of the WCRTC: John Brunt, Larry Herr, Alden Thompson, and Jon Dybdahl. Other attendees were new to the teaching of religion, such as Jody Washburn (WWU), Whitny Braun (LLU), and Zane Yi (LLU). Presentations for the weekend on a variety of topics were given by Paul Dybdahl, Jody Washburn, and Dave Thomas from WWU; Jon Paulien, Whitny Braun, and Zane Yi from LLU; and Bruce Boyd and Kevin Burrell from Burman University.

Sabbath afternoon walk on WWU campus.