



Winter 2015

The College of Bible and Ministry of Harding University seeks to lead all students to know, live and share God's Word and to understand, love and serve God's world through and beyond their chosen vocation.

Monte Cox, Dean
College of Bible & Ministry

Daniel Stockstill, Assoc. Dean
College of Bible & Ministry

Scott Adair, Director
Center for Family Ministry

Andrew Baker, Director
Mitchell Center for Leadership
and Ministry

Shawn Daggett, Director
Center for World Missions

Lew Moore, Chair
Marriage & Family Therapy

Bill Richardson, Director
Center for Advanced
Ministry Training

Tim Westbrook, Director
Distance Delivery Bible

Randy Willingham, Director
Pure Heart Vision

Published by the Office for Church Relations

Dan Williams

Vice President for Church Relations

Teresa Castleman
Administrative Assistant

Box 12280 Searcy, AR 72149-2280

501.279.4449

churchrelations@harding.edu

An Interview with Missionary-In-Residence Marcus Reese

Can you tell Salt, Light, and Leaven how you ended up at Harding University and what you are doing here this year?



Harding has a wonderful tradition of bringing in a different missionary each year as a visiting professor. I still remember spending my fourth-grade year in Searcy when my dad, John Reese, was in this role in 1984-1985, and now here I am again.

But rather than becoming a stale tradition, it seems that the College of Bible and Ministry is treating us "visiting missionaries" better than ever before. Now there are stipends and a car and paid utilities in a house stocked with everything from sheets to silverware.

As I understand it from my supervisors, Monte Cox and Shawn Daggett, the main purpose of this role is to provide helpful perspectives, fresh from the global mission effort, to students and to faculty.

In pursuit of this goal, they are willing to customize the role based on the gifts and desires of each new visiting missionary. In my case, I taught a couple of daily Freshman Bible classes last Fall, and this Spring I'm facilitating a course called "Internet Missions" and doing a related project outside of the classroom.

I'm loving the faculty, staff and students here. They're helping me in many ways as I rediscover what it means to serve God in America.

Could you briefly share with us how God led you to Papua New Guinea and what you did while you were there?

"Make disciples of all nations." To obey this loving command of Jesus, some of us have to go and others have to send. I grew up mostly overseas in a missionary family, so it was natural for me to be one of the goers. (continued on page 2)

Diane loved her rural upbringing in Kansas, but somehow she always felt like a world citizen. She was an exchange student in Mexico her Junior year of high school, and while there she dedicated her life to serving God. She was planning to be a missionary when I met her at Harding in the mid-90s.

We knew we needed mentors, so while working on a graduate degree at Harding's campus in Memphis, we teamed up with Leslie and Loopie Williams. They had worked in Papua New Guinea (or PNG) before, so they introduced us to that amazing nation. Later we were joined by Craig and Jeri Ford.

People in PNG are traditionally very close to nature--growing their own food, making their own houses, and fearing spirits of the land. They also fear the witchcraft of their nearest neighbors, but they often support and depend on those same neighbors. There are 850 languages in the country, the majority of which have no Bibles. My PNG friends tell me that they would have eaten me if I had come a century earlier, but in my experience they are a very friendly culture.

From January 2001 when we arrived in PNG, we tried to be partners with local people. Jesus' culture is foreign to both America and PNG, but people in PNG are eager to learn about Jesus, just as we are.



As we shared Jesus with them, the new Christians helped us to see what following Jesus means in their context. They helped us, by God's mercy, to start a handful of small churches, and ultimately they matured to the point that they no longer needed us.

The Williamses left in 2010, the Fords in 2012, and we left in May 2014. In the months since we left, our PNG friends have already planted a church of a dozen new Christians in a new area. We're thankful that God is continuing to gather his lost sheep.

Before you arrived back in the United States, did you have any concerns about reverse cultural adjustment?

Yes, we are thankful for missions authors and ministries like InterMission and MRN who made us aware of the dangers of reverse culture shock. Forewarned is forearmed.

As you made that adjustment back to American culture, were there any unanticipated surprises?

One surprise was how easy the process has been, at least up to now. Apparently churches in America are also educated regarding the difficulties that returning missionaries face. It's hard for us to experience reverse culture shock when we're being so well cared for by our sponsoring church, Westover Hills in Austin. We have received similar treatment from Holmes Road church in Memphis and Downtown church in Searcy, as well as from Harding University and others. God must love us and them.

What has been the most difficult part of that process for you and Diane?

Before we left PNG, it was very hard to say goodbye. I think I cried more in those last two weeks than in the rest of my life combined. After we arrived, it was hard to see our sixth grader being pressured to have a boyfriend as soon as she enrolled at public school, but after she resisted the initial pressures, the situation relaxed.

What would you say are some of the best things a church family can do to help with this kind of re-adjustment as their missionaries come back from overseas?

Let me share the example of our sponsoring church. The Westover Hills congregation is paying us approximately two weeks of severance pay for every year on the field. They gave us a lot of new clothes to help us in the adjustment. They arranged peaceful getaways for our family and for Diane and me as a couple. They have already committed to sending our whole family to visit PNG for a month next year. But really, the process began before we even went to PNG when a number of families from Westover Hills formed our support team and maintained their relationship with us through the years. As a result, we and even our kids felt that we were coming home to friends. I would say that is a good example for any church family to follow.

What do you miss the most about Papua New Guinea?

We miss the tropical warmth and the warm smiles. We miss the peacefulness of the bay surrounded by mountains--and of a culture that is not too busy. We miss the green of the rainforest and the spiritual growth of the Christians.

What are some of your plans and dreams for the future?

I've been taking one online course at a time for years now, so I graduate in May with a degree in Computer Science. I hope to use it somehow for God's glory. We look forward to serving our parents and "passport country" for a few years. Later, if God allows, we would love to find another opportunity to serve abroad. But what we really want is for God's kingdom to come in its fullness.



FACULTY NOTES

Our Bible faculty are serving the kingdom all over the world. Here are some examples:



Dr. Dale Manor read a paper at the annual Evangelical Theological Society/Near Eastern Archaeology Society meeting in San Diego in November. The paper was entitled: "The Logic of the Goddess: Anthropological Perspectives on Israel's Struggles with Asherah."



Dr. Phil Thompson made four presentations at the Waterview Church of Christ, Richardson, Texas, on the theme: "Can a Thinking Person Believe?" in October. The topics were: (1) Can a Christian be a Thinking Person? (2) Can a Thinking Person Believe in a God who Created the Universe? (3) Can a Thinking Person Believe in a God who Allows Suffering? (4) Can a Thinking Person Believe in Jesus who Rose from the Dead?



This January Dr. Kevin Youngblood spent a week in Australia at Camp Gidawarra teaching on the holiness of God and his people from the book of Leviticus. The theme was "The Contagious Holiness of God."



Dr. Kraig Martin recently published a paper in corroboration with Dr. Ryan Byerly, a philosophy professor at Regent University, entitled "Problems for Explanationism on Both Sides" in the philosophy journal, *Erkenntnis*.



Anessa Westbrook had an eight-lesson Bible study published in the Sept/Oct edition of Christian Woman titled "Showers of Blessings."



Dr. Kevin Youngblood contributed a chapter entitled "The Greek Version of Lamentations" in the soon to be released *T & T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* published by Bloomsbury/T & T Clark Press of London. He is also currently working on a commentary on Lamentations that is under contract with Zondervan to be published as one of the volumes in the Hearing the Message of Scripture (HMS) Commentary series.

SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

The theme of this fall's Bible lectureship will be "SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM: Unlocking the Treasures of the Parables." There is a popular understanding of the parables as being cleverly constructed stories that simplify complex themes so "you can't miss it" – nifty little narratives that are so simple even the dullest of readers can get the point. That is not at all how Jesus explained them!

Matthew 13:10-12 tells us, *"The disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?' He replied, 'The knowledge of the secrets of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.'"*

The parables will never make sense to people unless the listeners already possess a certain quality. The parables will unlock the secrets of the kingdom only for individuals who already have the proper preparation to receive them.

What is that quality? Here's a clue: this passage comes in the middle of two connected sections – the parable of the sower and the soils precedes it, and Jesus' explanation of the parable that follows it. What is the "good soil" that responds to the word by bringing forth a crop? It is the man with the *"good and honest heart"* (Luke 8:15). Without that quality, we will never grasp the meaning of the Word, and it will never produce any fruit in our life. It's not only what the texts say to us, but what *we* bring to them, that enables us to grasp their meaning!

The parables, therefore, are not just didactic – they are prophetic. They stand in judgment of us by presenting us with truths we will comprehend only if we are spiritually receptive. It reminds me of the prayer of Jesus in Matthew 11:25, where he says, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."* My goal, therefore, should be more than simply reading the Scriptures: I should also be cultivating the humility it takes to have a teachable, reachable heart.

I invite you to join us on the campus of Harding University this fall on September 27-30 as together we unlock the "Secrets of the Kingdom." To learn more, go to www.harding.edu/lectureship. For the latest updates, visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HULectureship.

-Dan Williams

Vice-President for Church Relations



Winter 2015