

The OPEN DOOR



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COMMENCEMENT 2013

On June 22, 2013, nearly 500 people gathered in the Gracie Theatre on the Husson University campus for the 194th and final commencement exercises of Bangor Theological Seminary. Commencement 2013 was the culmination of a year of unprecedented transition and change in the history of BTS.

A question that may be asked in a time of such radical institutional change is: what do we need to preserve? In this issue of *The Open Door* our singular task is to help preserve the memory of the pride and the pathos of one day—one very important day—in the life of Bangor Theological Seminary. Here you will find the text of Daniel Aleshire's Address to the Graduates, as well as sermons by Pam Shellberg at the morning Baccalaureate Service and Elaine Hewes at the evening Service of Recognition, Release, and Blessing for the faculty and staff. Among other contributions, you will also encounter reflections from alumnus Ken Dale and 2013 graduate Allison Gammons about their experiences of that historic day.

On our legacy web site (www.bts.edu) there are links to archived video of the senior worship service and the graduation ceremony, and more photos by Fred Field. So, whether in digital form, or on paper, we hope these captured moments from that day in the life of BTS will be meaningful to you.

As Bangor Theological Seminary comes to the end of an historic time of passage, we are also preserving, in a very material sense:

- **our library**—through a donation to Colby College, which will share it widely through MaineCat and interlibrary loan;
- **our historical archives**—through a donation to the Maine Historical Society, to be organized and available for historical research for generations to come;
- **the Moulton collection of Holy Land archeological artifacts**—through a donation to the University of Southern California, to be used as a teaching collection, and accessible to a global audience, in their museum and through an online exhibit;
- **our Alumni/ae Association**—through the efforts and energy of committed graduates, and financial support from The BTS Center, to continue to help alumni/ae connect with and support each other, and The BTS Center;
- **Convocation**—through our historic mid-winter gathering for learning and fellowship, to continue to respond to the needs of faith communities and their leadership;
- **an endowment**—the gifts of past (and present) generations of donors—graduates, churches, faculty, staff, and friends—whose generosity and foresight will help support The BTS Center as it honors its past, equipping clergy and laity for theologically grounded ministry, preparing them well to navigate the changes, challenges, and opportunities facing 21st century ministries.

As we move forward, The BTS Center will offer accessible and affordable, relevant and robust programs for theological learning, professional skills development, and spiritual formation: to equip faith leaders—clergy and laity—for ministry on the new frontiers of the 21st Century. Please go to www.thebtscenter.org to learn more about The BTS Center. Sign up for our electronic newsletter to receive announcements about the development of future programs.

The June 22, 2013 celebration of the Class of 2013 represented the end of a chapter of a story that is still being written. A new chapter is commencing. I pray that you will join us as we write it together, with God's help.

COMMENCEMENT: ORDER OF SERVICE

PROCESSIONAL

Voluntary
March

Susan Grove-Markwood

William Selby

B. Yarnold

WELCOME

Robert Grove-Markwood

INVOCATION

Geoffrey Black

HYMN

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 27:1-4; Genesis 32:22-32

ADDRESS

Blessing

Daniel Aleshire

GRANTING DIPLOMAS AND CONFERRING DEGREES

Presenting the Candidates

Steven Lewis

Granting of Diplomas and Degrees

PRAYER FOR THE CLASS

Pamela Shellberg

AWARDS

Steven Lewis

RECOGNITIONS

Marvin Ellison

CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE ALUMNI/AE ASSOCIATION

Kenneth Dale

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING

Robert Grove-Markwood

RECESSIONAL HYMN

Forward Through the Ages

POSTLUDE

Ein feste Burg

Susan Grove-Markwood

J. C. Bach

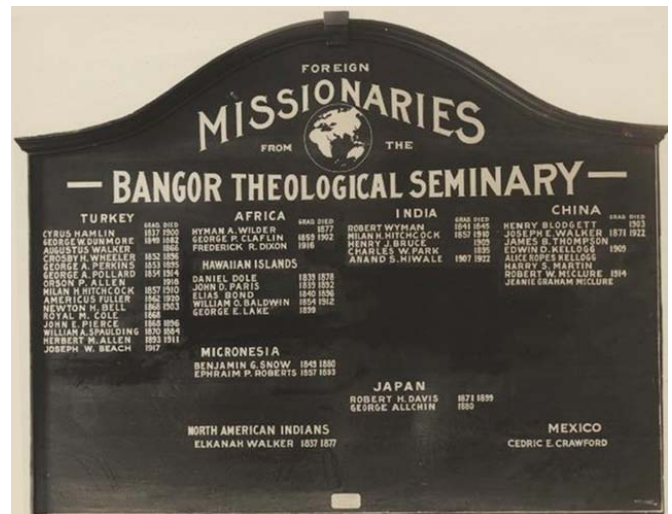
May God bless the Class of 2013, that they may faithfully represent the powerful legacy of Bangor Theological Seminary in the world, as have so many graduating classes before them.

Peace be with you,

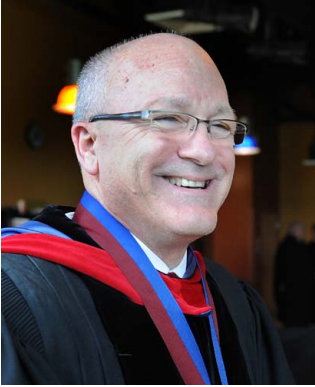


The Reverend Dr. Robert Grove-Markwood

Robert Grove-Markwood is the most recent BTS President (2011-2013), and now the Executive Director of The BTS Center. He received M.Div. ('82) & D.Min. ('03) degrees from BTS, and was a Trustee from 2006-2011.



The Missionary Board, representing the global vision and reach of the ministry of Bangor Seminary graduates, will be on display at All Souls Congregational Church in Bangor, as a long-term loan from the Maine Historical Society.



(Photo by Fred Field)

Grace and Peace to you, in the name of our God who is still speaking a word in the life of Bangor Theological Seminary.

May historians report that this was a graduation like other graduations. Yes, BTS Commencement 2013 is like other graduations, a time of ending and beginning. Familiar and meaningful (even cherished) patterns of learning and relationships change or come to an end, even, as graduation speakers are almost required to observe, there is a commencement, a beginning of a new chapter rich with new possibilities for each graduate. And like other graduation days, there will be both tears and laughter: tears for what must be left behind, laughter for the joy of memory and the anticipation of a passage to whatever new and good thing awaits.

And yet, may historians say that this was not a graduation like other graduations for Bangor Theological Seminary. Let it be said that at two o'clock in the afternoon of June 22, 2013, nearly 500 people gathered to celebrate with appropriate pride and great gladness: for the academic accomplishments, the spiritual striving for fluency of faith, the often courageous commitments to grow in intellectual and pastoral competence, and the rigorous effort to integrate knowledge and experience for a deeper theological grounding that has shaped and will mark the future education and ministries of these candidates for the Master of Arts, the Master of Divinity, and the Doctor of Ministry degrees.

Let us acknowledge that there is also an historically unique backdrop to this day. Clearly, a sense of loss and sadness, even grief, is with us today at this final conferring of degrees for our beloved school. There is rejoicing and weeping. There is weeping in our rejoicing; there is rejoicing in our weeping. Thanks be to God.

The cloudiness of this day is perhaps an apt symbol of

that backstory. Yet do we not fully trust that the sun is still there? As the poet notes: on the darkest night that ever fell on earth, the stars still shone. So, we trust that God is and will be present in the midst of sadness, pain, and loss in our lives.

May historians recall then that we were not distracted from our true purpose here today: to celebrate and to bless each of these graduates, and to give thanks for this BTS community where they learned together, and lived into, and out of, experiences that nurtured and formed them for a future ministry, perhaps yet to be fully revealed.

May God bless this time of gathering for the 194th Commencement of Bangor Theological Seminary

We are also here to witness and bless their going forth to take their place among that great cloud of witnesses, those past and present generations of women and men who have known Bangor Theological Seminary as a unique and special place for theological learning, spiritual formation, and as a laboratory for pastoral skills, for faithful service to God.

Thus, we are profoundly mindful of and grateful for a legacy of theological learning and spiritual formation borne by gifted faculty, loyal alumni/ae, faithful staff, diligent trustees, and generous friends for almost two centuries. On the stage this afternoon, and in the audience, there are so many living reminders of that long line of servant-teacher, and those past and present graduates (among whom I am proud to count myself) who are and will remain the living legacy of the powerful teaching ministry of this school. On this historic day, we rejoice that this legacy will become incarnate in the ministries of these graduates, and that Bangor Theological Seminary has helped them respond to God's call in their lives.

May God bless this time of gathering for the 194th Commencement of Bangor Theological Seminary.

COMMENCEMENT: ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES

by *The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire*

Executive Director, The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada

This is a tender commencement service for everyone here. The center piece of the service is joy for the achievement that you graduates have attained and the gifts that you are taking into a wide range of ministry efforts. Around the edges of the joy, however, there is sadness because the degree-granting mission of this historic and venerable institution comes to a close with this service. Life seldom comes to any of us as all joy or all sadness, does it? It often comes as a mixture of both. After the service, you graduates will be hugged and celebrated by the people who are closest to you, and in that moment of joy, some of you will think about persons who have loved you and would love to celebrate this moment with you, but they are absent. Your joy will persist, but sadness will linger on the margin. What should I say in a service marked by such real joy and tender sadness? I have decided to invite your attention to a concept that is present in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures: the biblical concept of blessing, and to do that by telling you two bible stories.

You know them both. They are part of the biblical narrative that holds on to us even when we are not sure how to hold on to them. Both joy and sadness are evident in these stories. The first story is about a blessing that occurs at the end of a life. The second is about a blessing that occurs at the beginning of a mission. The scripture that was read earlier in the service is the second story and we will get to it in



The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire delivering the Commencement Address

(Fred Field)

a moment. That story is best heard in the context of the first story, one that is in Genesis 27.

I

Isaac is near death and wants to bless his son Esau, who was born before his twin brother. The story begins this way: When Isaac had grown old and his eyesight was failing, he summoned his older son Esau and said to him, “My son?” And Esau said, “I’m here.” Isaac said, “I’m old and don’t know when I will die. So now, take your hunting gear, your bow and quiver of arrows, go out to the field, and hunt game for me. Make me the delicious food that I love and bring it to me so I can eat. Then I can bless you before I die.” (Genesis 27 CEB)

The story does not play out the way that old man Isaac had hoped. While Esau is out hunting, Jacob and his mother conspired to trick

Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Rebekah, Jacob’s mother, asked him to get two choice lambs from the flock that she would prepare to Isaac’s liking. Jacob would pretend to be Esau and receive the blessing. When Jacob expressed some worry about the plan, fearing that he would end up cursed rather than blessed, Rebekah said, “Let your curse be on me.” They proceeded with the plan. Rebekah gave Esau’s best garments to Jacob and put some skins on his arms and hands so he would feel hairy, like his brother, to a nearly blind father. The meat and bread were prepared, and Jacob served the wine and meal to his father. Even though Isaac was suspicious about whether the person in the room was really Esau, he gave his blessing with these words: “May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve

you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" The riches of the earth, the service of the world's people, influence over siblings, punishment to the people who try to hurt you—it was an amazing blessing. It promised wealth, power, and the social prestige that go along with them. I think that the vernacular of the day would exclaim: awesome!

It is a troubling story. The blessing was gained by trickery and dishonesty. A son takes advantage of his old father, nearly blind and close to death. A brother loses what was rightfully his by birthright. A mother favors one son over the other and ends up pitting the brothers against one another. There is something in the story for everyone to find offensive. There may be some justice, at least poetic justice, but no more. Remember an earlier story when Esau came home hungry and exchanged his birthright with Jacob for some dinner? Now, while Esau is out hunting for Isaac's dinner, Jacob steals the blessing. But poetic justice is not enough; we long for some redemption. But there would be none. When Esau and Isaac realized what had happened, Esau angrily pleaded for the blessing he rightfully deserved. Isaac responded to his son with a painful question and an even more painful declaration: "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!" The blessing sticks, regardless of the moral vision that accompanied

its attainment. Money and power and influence bring privilege and respect, whether they are the result of honest endeavor or dishonest trickery. Most of us would rather the rain fall on the just more than the unjust, but life and its privileges often do not happen that way. The blessing given to Jacob sticks.

Your joy will persist, but sadness will linger on the margin

In many ways, this blessing is hard for us to identify with. Even without the trickery or deception, we tend to be suspicious of power and money because we suspect that they may have been attained at others' expense, and even if obtained with integrity, they have a way of corrupting people. Genesis is more comfortable with wealth and power than we tend to be, and the text never suggests any question about their desirability or goodness. I regret to tell you that money might be a good thing, now that you have completed your education with a degree that does not pave the way to personal riches, but Genesis never condemns the content of Jacob's blessing.

The trickery of Jacob and our problematic concerns about wealth and power tend to overtake the hearing of the story, and we can overlook the reason Isaac wanted to grant a blessing. He was old, near death, and the end of life calls for a blessing. I am not sure what the ancient Hebrews understood

about the blessing at the end of life, but I have known of people near death who powered themselves to live until adult children could be present so a parent could give a final word of love, of encouragement, of blessing. Something about an ending calls for a blessing. I will come back to this point before I close.

II

The story continues. Esau's anger festered into pure hatred, and he plotted to kill Jacob. It was Cain and Abel all over again. Isaac and Rebekah told Jacob he must leave and find a wife among another people. He does, and while he is gone, he becomes rich and powerful, just as he was blessed to become.

In due time, Jacob received a word from the Lord that he should return home—and that meant returning to a brother who hated him, wanted to kill him, and had amassed a small army of warriors to assist in the task. Jacob selects some gifts from among the riches he had accumulated, gathered his large family and his many servants, and started on what must have been a troubling journey. Another story about blessing unfolds during Jacob's journey. It is the one that was read as part of this service. (Genesis 32 CEB)

This blessing is different from the first, and in some ways, it is one with which new seminary graduates might identify. Not so much the two wives and the women servants, or the eleven children, but going to a place that you were not sure about, being alone more than once, wrestling through a restless night, struggling with strangers,

wanting to meet God and being scared to death that you might. Given some of your experiences these past several years at Bangor, you might have thought that this story is about Jacob going to seminary! It's not, of course. You know that because you have gone to seminary and learned that a text like this means some

things, doesn't mean others, and never means merely what you or I want it to mean because it would fit a point we want to make.

Jacob's night near Jabbok does sound a little familiar, though, doesn't it? Some professor said something that challenged something that you held dear, and you struggled—first over coffee with friends, then by yourself late at night. Someone said something to you at the church where you did field education that was unfair and unkind. The words stung then and they come back to haunt you every once in a while. Your CPE supervisor was more right about you than you wanted to admit, and you began to wrestle with a part of you that you had avoided craftily until now. A seminary education has many moments, and some of them are a little like this night in Jacob's life.

The text is silent about why Jacob left his family and crossed the ford. Maybe he was getting ready to confront his past and find his future, and he needed to steal away to ready himself.

What we know from the text is that it was a long and difficult



The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire addressing the newest alums (Fred Field)

night. Jacob encountered a man whose identity was unknown, and he ended up wrestling with him until daybreak. Jacob seemed to be winning and, "When the man saw that he couldn't defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob's thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob's thigh as he wrestled with him. The man told Jacob to let him go because the day was breaking, but Jacob said, 'I won't let you go until you bless me.'" Jacob had demonstrated his ability to get blessings before. Was he up to his old tricks, again?

The first story about blessing raised questions about the kind of blessing Jacob received. This second story raises questions about the aggressive pursuit of a blessing. Was Jacob being faithful or self-serving? Is seeking a blessing contrary to self-giving service? If I understand the biblical concept of blessing, God's blessings are not extra credit that God hands out every once in a while: they are a necessity of life. We cannot hope to have lives of meaning without God's blessings. The blessing of God is worth a wrestling match.

Jacob's first blessing was about power and wealth. What was this second blessing about? After Jacob

told the stranger his name, the man said, "Your name won't be Jacob any longer, but Israel, because you struggled with God and with men and won." Jacob the "supplanter" became Israel, "the one who perseveres with God."

You know from your study of the scripture that in ancient Hebrew

language and culture, a name and personal identity were all but the same. Jacob's blessing was a new identity. His old identity had done pretty well at getting him what he wanted during the first half of his life, but it would not serve him so well in the second half. The first blessing helped him get rich, but that was not what he needed to serve as the heir to God's promise to Abraham. Jacob was given a mission, and to accomplish that mission he received the blessing of a changed identity. By morning, he was the kind of person who could do what would have been impossible to do the day before.

If your theological education has worked well, you have received a blessing similar to Jacob's. You graduates are different people in some ways than you were when you entered your programs of study. The difference isn't a function of attending classes, or acquiring—and in some cases reading—many books. It isn't even the result of writing more papers than you care to remember. Good theological education engages your mind and crunches your soul. Whenever you wrestle with the God who created you and seeks to save you, you

will be changed. The faith that was altogether adequate to bring you here has been changed so that it will be adequate for the hard questions and personal tragedies that you encounter in ministry. If seminary has “worked” for you, you have been blessed like Jacob at Penial.

The question for you today as you receive your diploma is “what will you do with your blessing?”

I suppose your blessing could be used to cultivate status. You have studied with talented and able scholars and learned a wide range of lessons. The degrees you received bear public witness that you know some things that most people do not know. You might be able to use your knowledge to gather some status or power, a little like Jacob’s first blessing. That would be a misuse, however, of the blessing of a changed identity that has equipped you for ministry.

The best use of the blessing you have received is for you to use it to bless others. Myron Madden, a Baptist hospital chaplain, wrote a small book several decades ago in which he argued that the primary power that Christian clergy possess is the power to bless. In some religions, the religious leader has the power to curse—to inflict pain or suffering in the context of some religious purpose. Not so with the ministry of the Christian Gospel. In Christ’s name, you have only the power to do good, to build up, to seek justice, to reconcile the estranged, or in other words, the power to bless.

Like Jacob, you are coming to the conclusion of your seminary education with two blessings that are present this morning.

Commencement is a service of beginnings, and in Genesis, beginnings are accompanied by blessings. Like Isaac in his last days, this institution is nearing the end of the degree-granting expression of this seminary and it seeks to bless you as one of the last acts of this phase of its institutional life. In Genesis, the end calls for a blessing as well as the beginning. You have been blessed by the extraordinary heritage of this school to learn about ministry in the rugged and unique regions of Northern New England. Today, unlike any other graduates of this school, you are twice blessed: you receive both the blessing that comes at the beginning of your post-seminary ministry and the blessing that comes from the ending of two centuries of this seminary’s ministry.

What will you do with your blessing?

As I close, I am no more sure what should be said than I was when I began. Perhaps the best thing for me to do is to use the one power that I have as a Christian minister.

As you graduates leave this place... May

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace.

To the members of the board, who have made the hardest decision that any board will ever make for a theological school, who have sought

to be faithful to extend the mission of the institution into the future in the only way that appeared to be sustainable, who have sought to care for students in many ways and to be supportive of faculty and staff whose careers and livelihood were affected by this decision... May

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace.

To the faculty, who have implemented the mission of this school class by class and student by student, who have worked especially hard this year to offer the extra classes and pastoral care that students have needed to finish their degrees, who have stayed the course with academic integrity, and who seek to identify the next chapter of their lives... May

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace.

To administrators and staff, who have sought to work with strained resources, cover the work of positions vacated, attend to the details of this past year of classes while preparing for the next structure of the mission of this institution... May

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire is the Executive Director of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

by Dr. Pamela Shellberg

[Readings: Genesis 12:1-9 and John 3:1-12]



Dr. Pamela Shellberg

The readings for today both tell stories of people who find themselves summoned—summoned to new places, summoned to new ways of being. They are stories of invitation. They are stories that shimmer with promise, a promise beautifully described in these words by poet Wallace Stevens:

*Yet always there is another life,
A life beyond this present knowing,
A life lighter than this present splendor,
Brighter, perfected and distant away,
Not to be reached but to be known,
Not an attainment of the will
But something illogically received,
A divination, a letting down
From loftiness, misgivings dazzlingly
Resolved in dazzling discovery.*

God summons Abram, invites him to another life in another place distant away. God lets down from God's own loftiness a life beyond Abram's imagining—a life that will be marked by land, blessings, and descendants—numbering more than the stars in the sky or grains of sand on the seashore. The story shimmers with promise. But the truth is that there is another promise hidden within, a second promise we get a little closer to when we pay attention to the words of God's summons. God says, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's home to the land that I will show you." But another way to read the Hebrew text would be, "Leave."

"You, Abram. Leave. Leave your country and your kindred—leave your father's home."

Leave. Not just go. Can you feel the difference? Do you see the shimmer dim just a little bit? This is how I experienced it when I first arrived in Bangor:

Go. Go to Maine, Pam. Go to the ocean; go to the land

of lighthouses and rocky, rugged coastlines; go to the land of the lobster pound; go, open the scriptures with seminarians; go to the land God will show you; go on an adventure!

We are living the difference between leaving and going right this very minute

Leave. Leave the Midwest, Pam. Leave the deeply rolling farmland of Southern Wisconsin; leave the vast and glorious expanse of Lake Michigan; leave the easily navigated grid system of Milwaukee's city streets; leave the land of more Lutheran churches than you can count; leave your widowed mother; leave your country and your kindred and your father's home.

We, you and I, are living the difference between leaving and going right this very minute. Go. Go across the stage this afternoon with diploma in hand, go to pulpits and to the prisoners and to the bedsides of the sick and the dying, go to the poor in the streets; go to new institutions, to new courses of study, to new campuses, and new perspectives; go into new missions, purposes, and identities; go meet new colleagues and make new friends. Leave. Leave the library stacks and the student lounge; leave Trish and Bonnie and Laurie; leave the security of student status; leave days ordered by classes and conversations and course preparations; leave your offices and your institutional affiliation; leave your seminary identities; leave your legacies...

In *many* of our leavings and goings, there can be a sense of freshening, of a clean slate, of a do-over. Just like Abram, we are beckoned to new ways of life by the strong call of promise. But in *all* of our leavings and goings, there will also and always be some degree of dislocation and of grief. There is always some threat—when the place that told us who we are, the friend who helped us remember who we are, the work that reflected who we are, the traditions, the relationships, the ranks and privileges that shaped who we are—have to be relinquished. Leaving that which has ordered our days and us in them is to look



Jennifer Reed receiving the award for the highest grade point for the M.Div. program (Fred Field)

out over a new landscape that is unfamiliar at best—and at worst might even seem a bit desolate. The light of promise and the exhilaration of freedom exist in an uneasy tension with the eclipse of anxiety and the darkness of doubts.

God said to Abram “leave,” not just “go.” And there is both promise and threat in the tension between the leaving and the going. A tension present in the story of Nicodemus as well.

The people for whom John wrote his Gospel late in the first century were likely Jewish Christians, who, while believing that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God, had continued to participate in the communal life of the synagogue and in the religious festivals of Judaism. They wouldn’t have seen any discontinuity—Jesus was the Messiah of Israel, after all. But the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple by the Roman army in the year 70 CE was an event of catastrophic proportion for Jews, an immense psychological devastation insofar as the contours of the landscape of Jewish identity were seismically reconfigured. The place that had ordered their lives—the place that had shaped their identity through worship and sacrifices to the God who resided there—the place that had been the physical center of their spiritual universe was no more.

As markers of Jewish identity subsequently coalesced around the teachings of Torah, reshaping Jewish piety and practice, those Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah—and who affiliated with Gentiles who believed it, too—were eventually expelled from the synagogues and forbidden from participation. It was

an extreme and painful kind of “leaving” for many Christian Jews who were then severed from family and friends and the rich liturgical life that had given their spiritual identities such beautiful expression. For many, the threat and pain of dislocation was too great, and they abandoned their belief in Jesus or kept it secret in order to preserve their connections to the synagogue community. John’s people, however, had done neither—and they suffered for it. John was concerned to speak to that suffering, and wrote to reorient them away from what they had left and toward where they had gone.

Grace summons those who are whole to be broken

And so John tells the story of Nicodemus—in a move to strengthen his group’s sense of identity and their resolve. He draws stark contrasts between Nicodemus and another important character in his Gospel, the Samaritan woman at the well. Nicodemus, a Jew and a respected teacher, comes to Jesus at night, under cover of darkness, to secretly and tentatively meet with Jesus. In their conversation, Nicodemus seems confused and clueless; he never really seems to “get” what Jesus is saying. The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, meets Jesus in broad daylight—and she, whom we would not expect to have a clue about Jesus, and who, by all rights, should flat out reject him—well, she totally “gets” him, recognizes him as the Messiah, and converts a whole town with her very public testimony.

And *that* was the good news for John’s people in the first century—that those from whom they had been forced to leave, like Nicodemus, had not understood who Jesus was, and that the new land into which they had gone was land over which the spirit of Jesus was blowing; they had gone into the kingdom of God. It was good news John delivered to them—and he did it at Nicodemus’s expense.

And, truth be told, I feel like it also comes at my expense, because I actually feel a deep sympathy with Nicodemus. What Jesus tries to explain to him, what Jesus asks of Nicodemus, is a hard thing. A hard thing to understand. A hard thing to do.

Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born “from above,” in words that can also be translated born “again” or “anew.” Jesus says it is the way to enter the landscape of the kingdom—which sounds like a terrific place to “go.” And the poetic language of water and spirit soften the edges of Jesus’ words, make them sound like an invitation, draw us into the promise of the going.

But what Jesus says here in this poetic language is precisely what he says more plainly in the other gospels, in words with sharper edges, where they appear more as imperatives than invitation: if you want to be my disciple, you must hate your mother and father; everyone who turns back is not fit for the kingdom; leave the dead to bury their dead. His words have no soft edges there—and in truth they don’t here, either, because no matter how Jesus phrases it, there is always a requirement in his claim on us for some kind of relinquishment. What Jesus is talking about here—and what I think Nicodemus knows—is that in the language of being born again there is not only an invitation to go, but also a demand to leave.

I want to resist—and actually sort of resent—John’s suggestion that Nicodemus is clueless about spiritual things. Nicodemus is a teacher and a religious leader. As a Jew, his identity has been shaped at the very level of his DNA by an understanding of being held in covenant relationship with God; it is an identity shaped by his reading of Torah, of the story of Israel’s liberation from bondage in Egypt and from exile in Babylon; it is an identity shaped by the celebrations of the liturgical year, by the sacramental transformations of ritual and reading, and by a community that mirrored back to him a shared set of experiences of God’s presence in their history.

John mocks Nicodemus but I cannot. I share Nicodemus’s misgivings. I know his fear.

My life, for the most part, is one of shimmering splendor. I think the fingerprints of God are all over it. So, I can imagine Nicodemus just like me, looking at the splendor of the present life into which he was born, seeing it for the richness it holds, the value it holds, for the beauty and blessing it holds. I imagine Nicodemus really and truly not getting what Jesus is saying about being born again in the spirit because I imagine Nicodemus fully believing that his life, his



The Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, delivered the Invocation (Fred Field)

family, his synagogue, his worship, his relationship with God are all *already* spirit-infused. I imagine him being utterly confused about what he hears because it just doesn’t add up that he’d be asked to *leave*, it would have been a word illogically received. And of course, if Nicodemus understands the full implication of what Jesus is saying, then I can imagine how the thought of leaving his familiar landscape terrifies him.

But here’s the thing. Here is the promise. Here is the dazzling discovery. This is often just how grace comes. In forms we do not always welcome, in moments summoning us to relinquish present splendors. This was the truth that the gospel writer and his people had come to know—that in having left the world they knew and being delivered into a barren landscape where there was only water and wind—they had, in fact, been born again—with eyes that could see anew, could see from above a grace and truth known only in brokenness, in relinquishment, in living lives pared down to their very bones.

John mocks Nicodemus for his failure to see and to understand. John mocks Nicodemus, but Jesus does not. Jesus receives Nicodemus in his darkness and confusion. Jesus extends him the invitation to see the kingdom, to enter a life of fullness beyond his present knowing and beyond his present splendor, to conceive a life he had not been able to conceive. But the invitation was not gentle. Because the word Jesus speaks, the word that *is* Jesus—full of grace and truth—is a word of grace that not only longs for the broken to be made whole, but also summons those who are whole to be broken.

Grace summons those who are whole to be broken. This is the invitation to Nicodemus. And it is a hard thing. Of course God longs to make us whole in our brokenness, but there is often something about our wholeness that has to be broken through—something about its fullness, its thick walls of defenses, its lines of security—sometimes even something about its splendor has to be broken through so that our vision for God is unobstructed.

The story of Nicodemus begins but doesn't end with today's reading. Nicodemus appears twice more in John's Gospel.

Once he appears to be reminding his fellow Pharisees of the law requiring a hearing before passing a sentence of judgment on Jesus (7:50ff); and again after Jesus' death when Nicodemus assists Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial. Now, most commentators will argue for how these actions suggest that Nicodemus had in fact become a follower of Jesus. But I am not so sure. John makes it clear that Nicodemus is still "one of them," meaning a Pharisee, and that even Joseph of Arimathea was a "secret" disciple. But I wonder if the point John makes is really this: that if one wants to go but does not really leave, then one actually is not, cannot, be born anew. In being secret disciples, in being ones who could not relinquish their traditions, all Nicodemus and Joseph could be left with at the end was the dust of Jesus' dead body; they had their beautiful tradition of burial rituals, but only Jesus' bones. I think John shows us his picture of the dead burying the dead.

Jesus says you cannot "see" the kingdom of God, you cannot enter the kingdom, without being born of the Spirit. After his resurrection, Jesus returns briefly, entering a room where his disciples are gathered and he breathes the Holy Spirit into them. The word John uses here, the Greek word for "breathes," appears only here in all of the New Testament and only twice in the Greek translation of the Old Testament John would have read.



2013 graduates and commencement service participants

(Fred Field)

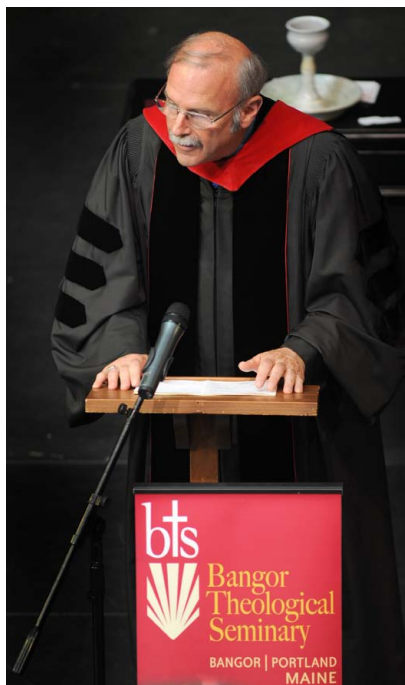
There in the Septuagint, according to the prophet Ezekiel, God *breathes* life into a valley full of dried bones scattered across a desert wilderness; and there, according to Genesis, God breathes life into the dusty form fashioned as the first human. This is the breath Jesus breathes into his disciples, it is the breath God breathes into us, the breath conceiving in us lives we could not possibly have conceived of by ourselves; it is the wind that bears us anew, the wind that bears us from above; it is the spirit that promises to make us whole in our brokenness—even as it breaks us in our wholeness.

We don't always know where this spirit has come from or where it is going to take us. But we know that here—at Bangor Theological Seminary—we have made ourselves ready for our leavings and our goings, for our entrances into new landscapes, for enduring being broken in our wholeness, for discovering dazzling new wholeness in our brokenness, for dying and for being born anew. Here God's breath has animated our dry bones and our dusty frames. Here we have risen up, dripping the waters of new birth. Here we have heard the invitation and the demand—and the promise that we can and will be born again—and again and again and again.

Dr. Pamela Shellberg, Assistant Professor in New Testament, was the Senior Class Advisor.

COMMENCEMENT: ALUMNI/AE ASSOCIATION WELCOME

by The Rev. Dr. Ken Dale '82 and '94



The Rev. Dr. Ken Dale (Fred Field)

On behalf of the Alumni/ae Association of Bangor Seminary I offer heartfelt congratulations to you on your degrees. Know that there are many who rejoice with you—having shared the experience in this moment as you do today. Your experience of this school and community of fellow students and especially

faculty is something that will be with you and part of you in many ways as you continue the journey of life and faith.

Over the past year I have grown to appreciate the wisdom of Joan Chittister. In her little book, *Aspects of the Heart*, she shares a quote from George Bernard Shaw: *The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.* Chittister says that assuming that tomorrow will be the same as today is poor preparation for living. To live well we must learn that life is a work in progress and that it happens in small stages. She says that change is the essence of life and shares the words of Christina Baldwin, who wrote, *"Change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the phoenix."* I love that image—the egg of the phoenix!

Change as the constant is real for you as you received your degrees this afternoon. No one goes through seminary without change in some way. Your accomplishment does require new measurements. Today does mark a new beginning for you—there is more to who you are now than when you began your studies. Chittister also writes:

deciding which ideas to carry forward in life determines what kind of person we will be in the end: the reactionary who trusts the God of yesterday but not the God of tomorrow or the revolutionary who believes that our creating God goes on creating what we need from age to age. The important thing is to remember that [our] memories are only signs of the possible, and personal growth is the ability to test them out.

And I can't help but think of that "egg of the phoenix" in this time in the life of BTS as it comes to a close this month. There is an egg—and isn't that egg beginning to crack as God goes on creating. BTS too will celebrate a new beginning, a new chapter, in its long and purposeful history.

It is the hope and prayer of the Alumni/ae Association that we will continue to gather as community, as the community of BTS, and remember and share all that we cherish from our experience here over the years. I welcome you graduates and all current students regardless of where you are going to complete your studies—and I can't help but give in to the desire to include faculty and staff of BTS as well—welcome to the Alumni/ae Association.

Again—congratulations and may God bless you each and all as you put your gifts to work in God's world.

The Rev. Dr. Ken Dale is the President of the BTS Alumni/ae Association and Pastor of Second Congregational Church, UCC of Newcastle, Maine.



Graduate Linda Mawhorter, M.Div.

(Fred Field)

by Allison C. Gammons '13



Allison received the award for the highest grade point in the M.A. program (Fred Field)

The room was filled with the low hum of voices, punctuated by occasional bursts of laughter. The group I stood with seemed to move between trying to live into the more dignified manner that our robes (and the fact that we were soon to become seminary graduates) might denote, and being more like the people I had come to know through my time at Bangor Theological Seminary.

The gravitas of the moment could not override the personalities—laughter, silliness, the biggest smiles you can imagine, jokes and goofing around. I was surrounded by Love and Joy. These people, along with the rest of our BTS family that waited for us to proceed into the Gracie Auditorium, were what this day was all about for me. These were the people I had spent the previous three years with, sharing food and laughter, songs and dance, silly skits and theological insights, earnest discussions and debates, tears and prayers. These were the people who embodied what BTS means to me, who challenged me to stretch and grow, and this was one of those

moments that I will always return to when I think about graduation.

Honestly, much of the day is a blur—but a blur with highlights. I will never forget, for instance, how Gracie Theatre looked that morning before we began our worship together. That worship service, especially, will stay with me: I had spent the year serving as coordinator of the worship committee, and everything—the votives and fabric drapes, the songs and dancing, the words and prayers—was filled with memory and meaning. To see the water, filled with blessings and prayers from the BTS community, poured together by friends who would not be graduating with me, but had been so integral to my journey at BTS, brought tears to my eyes. And the tears did not stop, increasing with each moment of the service, as the prayers were shared, as Dr. Pamela Shellberg led us in an exploration of “leaving” and “going,” as we raised our voices together in song.

The baccalaureate sermon framed graduation for me in many ways. This was a celebration, sending us out into the world of our ministries. It was a day of leaving, leaving the known, leaving this family, leaving the safety of BTS, leaving the regular theological conversations. But also a time of going. Going, to take these conversations to congregations and

communities. Going to the places whence we are called.

After worship my mind jumps to the time of processing into the Gracie, dressed in our robes, the reality sinking in. We had made it.

I know that there were speakers, who shared with us their wisdom, who made us laugh, who made us think in the moment. But that is not the part that stands out in my mind. What comes next is the memory of us being led from our seats on the stage to backstage, where we waited in the wings for our names to be called, to be hooded, and to receive our degrees.

Really, I suppose, the entire day is about that moment. Being recognized in front of all those people, by the very people who have guided us in this process. What I remember from that walk is the little push from Dr. Marvin Ellison once I had received my hood. A signal that I was ready to keep walking, but it also seemed to me the physical

(continued on p.17)



The Rev. Dr. Marvin Ellison with BTS students during the Baccalaureate Service (Fred Field)

by The Rev. Dr. Ken Dale '82 and '94

The day of the final commencement of Bangor Theological Seminary was memorable to say the very least.

The senior worship that morning was all that it needed to be and the sermon delivered by Dr. Pam Shellberg was right on as she simultaneously addressed both the transition of the graduates and the beloved institution from which they were graduating.

Commencement that afternoon kept most of the focus on those receiving their certificates and degrees and rightly so. There was some acknowledgement of closure but it was offered with hope for new beginnings and the future.

That evening when we gathered at All Souls UCC for the Service of Recognition, Release, and Blessing, for me the heartache was pretty intense, but in its own way necessary and healing. My heartstrings were tugged especially when each faculty member took off their academic hoods and robes and laid them on a chair in the front of the sanctuary. All the years of dedication and teaching and untold impacts on the lives of so many came to mind. I could not imagine what it must have been like for them to experience such a moment.

Yet again, there was a sign of hope when each member of the staff and faculty individually received a prayer shawl and blessing. Heartfelt thanks go to all who made that service the important and very meaningful time of worship that it was.

As we now move forward the BTS Alumni/ae Association is determined to carry on into the future and seek to keep us all connected with our love and appreciation for BTS. The Executive Committee is enlisting the services of Deb Burwell from Paddling the Rapids as we look into the future of our Association. We met with Deb for a day of planning and visioning a few years ago and came up with some great hopes and plans for the Association. However, not too long after that, all the changes began to take shape and our beloved seminary closed.



Dean of Students Dr. Steven Lewis and new alum Maureen Steer (Fred Field)

We are planning to get together with Deb early in 2014 to rethink the purpose and structure of the Alumni/ae Association as we seek to maintain a sense of community and the ties that bind us together as BTS alums. We will continue to gather annually at Convocation to remember and recognize all that we celebrate of Bangor Seminary.

There will be the time of remembrance as we celebrate the lives and ministries of those who have died during the past year.

The BTS Alumni/ae Association is determined to carry on into the future and seek to keep us all connected

When you learn of such a death, please be sure to be in touch with the Executive Committee so that we do not overlook anyone. We will also continue with the Distinguished Alumna/us Award each year, again depending on you to nominate deserving recipients.

Our next gathering as an Association will be at Convocation 2014 on Monday evening, January 20th, at the Sable Oaks in Portland. Following a brief business meeting we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of BTS. How are you at trivia?

Bangor Theological Seminary Alumni/ae also have a page on Facebook and we are in hopes that this can be a means by which we keep each other informed and connected. Sue Kaplan-Burgess is managing this page for us; if you haven't already done so, please be sure to make that connection. Let's be intentional about maintaining our community.

Stay in touch with the BTS Alumni/ae Association on Facebook!

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Find us on

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by The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire

Executive Director, The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada

This evening, I want to share four observations about Bangor Theological Seminary.

1. My first encounter with Bangor was in an M.Div. class on the Teachings of Jesus. In addition to Bultmann's *Jesus and the Word*, and several other books, the most used text in the course was Burton Throckmorton's *Gospel Parallels*. (I did not know about Bangor, but in the late 1960s, I was a recipient of its scholarship. Over the years, this small school—without a Ph.D. program or university connection that are often associated with research productivity in theological education—has contributed significantly to research and publication that has been accessed broadly. Glenn Miller, who served as dean for many years, is the preeminent historian of American Protestant theological education.) All 900 pages of the second volume may not have been needed, but they tell the best story that has ever been told of theological education from the Civil War to World War II. With his other two volumes in this series, present and future scholars will have a reliable guide to Protestant theological education from the 17th to 21st centuries. Maybe it is long winters and the need to stay out of the cold, but Bangor has produced a great deal of scholarship over the years. I don't think that faculty members have done this at the expense of teaching and being present to students; it seems to have been in this school's DNA to be a productive center of theological scholarship, especially since World War II.

2. Far more than is true for most schools, Bangor has found its mission in the context of its location. It has taken Northern New England seriously, and sought to educate students for service in its small and often rural or small town congregations. In an era when a

lot of theological education attention went to urban ministry or ministry in Appalachia, Bangor continued to focus on ministry in small congregations in New England. This was nowhere more evident to me than when I was working with the seminary in the 1990s in the process of the approval of its D.Min. program. The program as initially designed took the congregation of which the students were typically the pastors seriously.

It demonstrated how good D.Min. education can benefit students and serve as a tool for congregational development. The design of the program, as I remember it, all but required the congregation to enroll along with its pastor. Students were encouraged to develop ministry projects and work on other assignments in

ways that benefitted the congregation they served. It was as thoughtful and creative a D.Min. design as I have seen in my years at ATS. It was not just a creative educational design; it reflected a missional commitment to ministry in Northern New England.

3. If it was not the first, Bangor was among the very first mainline Protestant theological schools to establish a branch campus and, subsequently, a mediated approach to theological education. Evangelical schools had been developing these kinds of programs, but there were few if any mainline schools doing them. Bangor's Portland program reflected a willingness to engage in educational innovation in service to its mission. That was evident in the Bangor plan that allowed persons without a baccalaureate to complete a seminary degree program and receive their degree after they completed the B.A. degree. It is evident in the effort to maintain multiple sites for the new D.Min. degree, because the geography of northern New England prohibited students from easy travel to Bangor. These examples



Pre-1920s postcard, Bangor Theological Seminary

point to a pattern of educational inventiveness, always in service to the New England setting and context for theological education.

4. Bangor has never had a whole lot of money, at least in the time that I have known it, but it has never done theological education on the cheap. It has been an overachieving school in a variety of ways. I spoke to ATS presidents earlier this year about two seminaries: Bangor and its closing and Beeson Divinity School and its celebration of the 25th anniversary of its founding. I contrasted the two schools. Beeson began with an \$80 million dollar gift, is housed in a large teaching university, is located in a growing population area in the South, and the population of its region has one of the highest church participation rates in the country. Bangor has struggled with the expense of a freestanding institution, is located in a sparsely populated area, serving a religious constituency that has been losing members, and has never had the kind of monetary resource that Beeson has had since its founding. Both Bangor and Beeson are deeply influenced by context and setting. For one, the setting has been a tailwind pushing it forward and accelerating its hard work. For the other, the setting has been a headwind, obstructing every effort to advance.

Overachieving Bangor Seminary has made a contribution to ministry in Northern New England and to theological scholarship that is disproportionate to its size and resources. And for that, gratitude is both appropriate and plentiful.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Aleshire is the Executive Director of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

(Gammons, continued from p.14)

manifestation of what that moment symbolized. Our time at BTS had been preparing us, and now we needed that gentle push—letting us know it was time to get going, to move on in our journey.

Then I made my way across the stage to receive the degree, to shake hands with the row of people waiting for me, and then to return to my seat and watch (and cheer) as others received theirs. I know receiving my degree felt like an important moment at the time, but now it holds such a small portion of my memory from the day. My best memories instead are about the BTS family that I sat with on that stage, and the family and friends that cheered us on, forming the audience both in the Gracie and across the country (thanks to the powers of technology).

The overwhelming sense of love, community, and celebration was what the day ended up really being about for me. The power of us coming together for this historic graduation and the power of us celebrating with such intention, knowing and recognizing the sadness that was also threaded through the day, but not allowing that to overshadow the celebration.

The divine walked with us. I felt the spirit moving through every moment—I heard it in the songs we sang during worship, all the way through to the laughter that emanated from the steps as we posed for the post-ceremony photograph. Commencement was a time of leaving; it was a time of going.

Allison Gammons received her M.A. as a member of the BTS Class of 2013. She currently lives in Portland, Oregon and is working on clearing the path for the next step of her journey.



New Message

Sue Stevens

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by The Rev. Elaine Hewes '97

[Below are words of introduction to Psalm 42 and the "sermon" from the Service of Recognition, Release, and Blessing.]

This morning, at baccalaureate, we centered ourselves on the beautiful line from Isaiah, "You shall be like a spring, whose waters never fail." In that service, we each poured our acclamations of thanksgiving, our petitions for healing, and our longings for God's presence into the baptismal font, each of us contributing from our own wellspring of joys and sorrows, trusting that God's love and mercy could hold it all.

And then, at the end of the service, we drew from that pool of water a portion of our communal longing and loving. So that as we went our separate ways we might carry with us the joys, the sorrows, the hopes and the tears of the Bangor Theological Seminary community, interspersed as they were and are in the well-spring of God, whose waters never fail.

"God had found ways to store the memory of water, so that even when there was no rain the trees and the birds would remember and remind the people."

Now this evening we gather for a service of recognition, of release and blessing. It is the last time the BTS community gathers as the BTS community in the form it has known for 200 years. And once again, we gather around the well-spring of God's love and grace, because it is the only place from which our help can come.

And so we come this evening bringing to mind the words of Psalm 42; a Psalm that speaks the truth of our longing, the depth of our thirsting, and the source of our healing and hoping.

We will hear the Psalm in three different ways; Reverend Mark Doty will read it using the New

Revised Standard Version. Reverend Grace Bartlett will read it using Eugene Peterson's translation "The Message." And then we will sing it in hymn form as printed in your booklet.

Some years ago, Reverend Kathleen Reed, a Lutheran pastor and assistant to the bishop in the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, wrote this in our synod newsletter:

"Last summer as part of my sabbatical I spent time in the desert, the high desert of New Mexico about a hundred miles north of Santa Fe. I'd never been to the desert before. What I found was amazing. For example, in that dry, barren landscape there were trees with trunks and branches that twist and swirl after the pattern of swift flowing rivers. And in the branches of those same trees were birds whose trilling sounded just like the music of streams after a night of gentle rain. Amazing! Here in the desert God had found ways to store the memory of water, so that even when there was no rain the trees and the birds would remember and remind the people.

"God made trees and birds to be the storing places for the memory of the Creator's sustaining goodness, places where the memory could not be forgotten. No matter what."

Kathleen Reed then goes on to say that the Church has such storing places where the memory of the Creator's sustaining goodness is held, releasing the memory of God's forgiveness and hope and love for those who, like me, like us, sometimes have trouble remembering these gifts, and in their thirst come looking. Storing places such as Scripture, the bread and wine of Holy Communion, the waters of baptism, the Creeds, sacred music and art, the accompanying love of those who extend a hand, a heart, a voice to others. All of them storing places, like the birds in the high desert of New Mexico whose trilling sounds from the twisting, swirling branches of trees, just like the music of streams after a night of gentle rain.

This evening, in this final part of this closing worship service, we will offer a blessing to the ten individuals

who have been over many years, but particularly in this past year, storing places of God's love and grace for others, offering to students, to colleagues, to visitors something like the sound of that rain in the high desert. Reminders of God's hope and love during a time when for many it has been hard to remember. We will

offer that blessing by way of a gift that we hope might in turn be a storing place of God's goodness for them in the days and years to come.

A storing place in the form of a prayer shawl made by the Redeemer Lutheran Prayer Shawl Makers, each one knit with love, using the color of water, of sky, of baptism, in hopes that they will be for the ten individuals receiving them reminders of God's mercy and grace in at least three ways. (And now I will speak to you, my dear "blessing receivers.")

First, a reminder that despite having taken off, for at least a little while, the robes of academia, the titles of institutional belonging, and the outward signs of your beloved vocations, you are still clothed with the most important identity marker of all.... the waters in which you were baptized and thereby claimed and named in love.

A renowned Lutheran pastor once reminded me of this when he spoke about a visit he made one day to see his mother in a nursing home, something he and his brother took turns doing with great regularity. Now what you have to know is that this Lutheran pastor is a guru in the ELCA, a widely-published author, a much-sought after speaker, a preacher extraordinaire.

So, as he tells the story, he was visiting his mother in the nursing home one day. They had just returned from the dining room where he had fed his mother her lunch, slow spoonful by slow spoonful. It had been the normal meal-time scene with the normal smells of canned peas and the normal sounds of nursing home



Jim Mello receiving his diploma from Dr. Steven Lewis (Fred Field)

murmurs and babbles and cries. The nurses' aides had just finished helping his mother and her roommate get into their beds for their afternoon rests when the Lutheran guru heard one of the new nurses' aides ask another who the "man in that room with Mrs. Erlander was," meaning him.

"Oh," answered one of the other aides, "That's just one of the sons."

"Just one of the sons." And in that moment, as my colleague tells the story, he looked at his mother, the woman who had birthed him, raised him, brought him to the waters of baptism, loved him through the thick and thin of it all.... he looked at her lying in her bed, and realized that of all the things upon which he had built his identity: his academic titles, his clergy collar, his list of publications, his long resume of accomplishments, none of it mattered as much as knowing he had been loved by her, loved by God, and unconditionally clothed in the grace of love's embrace. In that moment it came clear to him. Nothing mattered more than knowing he was one of the sons.

May this prayer shawl be for you a reminder of the waters of baptism, the well-spring of God's love that covers you, making you forever a son, a daughter, beloved of the God in whom we live and move and have our being. When you are not sure of any of the other identity markers that make you who you are, may you be sure of this.

Secondly, while you may not yet have thought of this possibility, your prayer shawl may be a storing place for God's goodness for you by becoming a tent—just as my grandfather Bergstrom and I used to use a blanket and two chairs to make a tent in his living room and then get underneath that beautiful dome, where we would drink root beer, eat a Swedish bread called "hardtack," and tell stories.

Now I suggest that you might do the same now and then; make a tent, that is, with two chairs and your prayer shawl; and then crawl under it and look up....to remind yourself of what has been the story of our God from the beginning of our Holy Scriptures. Namely, that God has made God's tent with us. That 'Emmanuel, God With Us' is with us wherever we go, as God has been with God's children and all of God's creation since first light came into the sky.

Now, oddly and wonderfully enough, this assurance of God making God's tent with us was one of the themes of a service held in the chapel on the old BTS campus on May 11, 2005. The service in which the BTS community bid farewell to the old campus and began its journey to the new campus at Husson University. At the service, I sang a song I had written for the occasion. It went like this:

*Over your head love goes to guide you.
Deep in your heart love lives inside you.
Under your feet love will provide you
A way to the heart of God.*

*Refrain:
And God goes with you wherever you go,
No matter how high, how deep, how far.
Up to the heavens and down to the grave,
Your tent is God's tent wherever you are.*

*Dark as the night may seem all around you,
Cold as the wind may feel as it blows,
After the night is the promise of morning,
And under the snow grows a rose.*

(refrain)

May this prayer shawl be a tent for you, reminding you that 'Emmanuel, God' is with you, wherever you are.

And lastly, may this prayer shawl be for you a storing place of God's goodness in this way. May it remind you, in all of its blueness, of the Penobscot River, of the Kenduskeag, of the Kennebec. May it remind you of the ocean that crashes even now on the rocky shores not far from where we gather this



Sherry Sivret giving two thumbs up

(Fred Field)

evening. Whether you stay here for the rest of your lives, or leave for some distant place, may it remind you of the beauty that is Maine and the people here whose lives you have touched and shaped and transformed..... the lives which you have helped to make into storing places for God's goodness and love.

LOVE WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD....

And every once in a while, when you wrap this prayer shawl around you, may you see somewhere in its blueness dolphins rising up out of the waters, stitching heaven to earth—as poet Ellen Baas puts it. Just as those dolphins are stitching sky to sea right now, not far from us at all....

Storing places, that remind us that God has done the same, that God does the same..... dolphins stitching God's self to us in a million ways, but most profoundly in the person of Jesus, who even now, in this particular ending moment, is extending blessings, weaving God's love into this place and this time, and promising in this ending that love will have the last word.

Love will have the last word.

The Rev. Elaine Hewes, pastor of the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bangor, is a 1997 BTS graduate and adjunct faculty member.

At the end of this graduation service, let us recall the way we began this final year at our Opening Convocation & Installation of the final President. It was our Academic Dean, Steve Lewis, who passionately called us, as those who would write this last chapter of the story of Bangor Theological Seminary as a degree-granting institution, to assume this privilege and the responsibility with dignity and honor to make those who have gone before us proud and to end this story well.

To all of the community that has lived and learned and loved one another through the challenge and change, may we also hear again the words of T.S. Eliot that were offered as a frame for this year:

*What we call the beginning is often the end.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.*

...

*We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

Commissioning: And now, with no more authority vested in me than the power we all have to embody God's love for one another, in whatever role or vocational manifestation you find yourself, and whatever form or shape your ministry, I commission you to be life-long learners, ever becoming theologically grounded and spiritually mature faith agents and advocates:

- Embodying mercy and grace for all
- Working for justice for all people and for all creation
- Advancing the ways of peace, and especially God's peace, which passes human understanding
- And all these things out of a deep love for God, and for one another

Blessing: As those who are called to ministry you will find yourselves in leadership roles, in positions of power, and if not in a particular role, then know that we all have the potential to be those who hold personal power. So, these words of blessing "For One Who Holds Power" by John O'Donohue (excerpted):

*May the gift of leadership awaken in you as a vocation,
Keep you mindful of the providence that calls you to serve.*

...

*May integrity of soul be your first ideal.
The source that will guide and bless your work.*

God be with you, Bangor Theological Seminary graduates! Go in peace to love and serve God with your whole selves! Amen.

The Reverend Dr. Robert Grove-Markwood



Susan Grove-Markwood and Jeff McIlwain

(Fred Field)



Lobby of the Gracie Theatre

(Fred Field)

Congratulations, Class of 2013!

Scott G. Chase, Certificate of Religion and Spirituality, In Absentia
Roger Lowell Daum, Doctor of Ministry, B.S., Clarion State College, 1960; M.S., University of Delaware, 1968; M.Div., Andover Newton Theological School, 2003
Irven Albert Gammon, Doctor of Ministry, B.A., Saint Joseph's College, 2003; M.Div., Bangor Theological Seminary, 2003
Cathy Jill Genthner, Doctor of Ministry, B.A., University of Southern Maine, 1982; M.Div., Bangor Theological Seminary, 2005
Rosalee T. Glass, Doctor of Ministry, B.A., Southern Connecticut State University, 1966; M.Div., Bangor Theological Seminary, 2005, In Absentia
Elizabeth Hope Follum Hoffman, Doctor of Ministry, B.A., University of New Hampshire, 1991; M.Ed., The University of New Hampshire, 1999; M.Div., Andover Newton Theological School, 2006
Timothy John LeConey, Doctor of Ministry, B.A., Drew University, 1990; M.Div., Andover Newton Theological School, 2000
Alison R. Barker, Master of Arts, B.S., University of Illinois, 1979; M.S., Michigan State University, 1983
Katherine Ilene Benedict, Master of Arts, B.F.A., Maine College of Art, 2001
Tricia Ann Carver-Watson, Master of Arts, B.S. Secondary Education, University of Maine, 2005; B.A. Spanish, University of Maine, 2005
Linda Cooper Costelloe, Master of Arts, A.A., Moorpark College, 1977; B.A. English, California State University Northridge, 1980; M.A. History, University of Maine, 2011
Thomas Horace Fales, Master of Arts, B.A., The George Washington University, 2007
Constance Joan French-Smith, Master of Arts, B.A. Science, University of Maine at Augusta, 2005, In Absentia
Allison Cecelia Gammons, Master of Arts, B.A., Marlboro College, 2003
Sandra A. Horne, Master of Arts, B.A., Bloomsburg University, 1999; M.A., Bucknell University, 2002
Dina Maria Lattanzi, Master of Arts, B.A., Providence College, 1990; M.A., Clark University, 1994, In Absentia
Susan McAvoy Leary, Master of Arts, A.S., Beal College, 1971; B.A., University of Maine, 1987
Nathan Macauley Lord, Master of Arts, B.A., Bowdoin College, 1978
Teresa L. Mack, Master of Arts
Bernice L. Martin, Master of Arts, B.A., University of New England, 1986
James Louis Mello, Master of Arts, B.A. Education, Rhode Island College, 1972
Judith A. Ahles, Master of Divinity
Dominic George Barbieri, Master of Divinity, B.A., Merrimack College, 1990
Harry Wightman Bennert, Jr., Master of Divinity, A.B., Bates College, 1958; M.D., Boston University, 1965
R. David Bures, Master of Divinity, In Absentia
Jennifer Louise Curran, Master of Divinity, B.A., Gordon College, 1997; B.S., University of Maine at Augusta, 2007
Joseph Charles Dressler, Master of Divinity, B.S. Math, College of New Jersey, 1969
Linette Carol George, Master of Divinity, B.A., Stanford University, 1986
Terry Jean Given, Master of Divinity, B.A., University of Maine, 1973; M.Ed., University of Maine, 1976
Carolyn Dearborn Kellis, Master of Divinity, B.S. Education, University of Maine, 1985
Cindy Jean Lufkin, Master of Divinity
Stephen Alexander MacLeod, Master of Divinity, B.A., Framingham State College, 2001
Alisabeth Anne MacLeod, Master of Divinity
Patricia Atherton Marsden, Master of Divinity, B.A., University of Southern Maine, 1990
Linda Davis Mawhorter, Master of Divinity, B.S., University of Denver, 1977; M.D., University of Colorado School of Medicine, 1981

Jeffrey Morgan McIlwain, Master of Divinity
Carolyn S. Neighoff, Master of Divinity, B.S. Education, University of Maine, 1989; M.Ed., University of Maine, 1996
Leland Bruce Philbrick, Master of Divinity, B.S., University of Maine at Augusta, 2004
Sharon A. Piantedosi, Master of Divinity
Jennifer W. Reed, Master of Divinity, B.S., Thomas College, 1988
Robert Henry Ross, Master of Divinity, B.A., Dartmouth College, 1968; M.Ed., Harvard University, 1973; Ph.D., Yale University, 1987
Marilyn Jean Sargent, Master of Divinity, In Absentia
Sheila Anne Seekins, Master of Divinity, B.S., University of Maine, 1972; B.S.N., University of Southern Maine, 1976; M.P.M., Seattle University, 1987; M.P.P., University of Southern Maine, 2000
Sherry Lyn Sivret, Master of Divinity
Patricia Arline Sprague, Master of Divinity, B.A. Political Science, University of Maine, 1974; M.S. Resource Economics, University of Maine, 1986
Maureen Eileen Steer, Master of Divinity, B.S., College for Lifelong Learning, 2001
Patricia Anne Stratton, Master of Divinity, B.S., Alderson-Broadbush College, 1982

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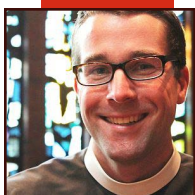
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Richard E. "Dick" Benner '74

Richard E. "Dick" Benner, 70, of Sarasota, FL passed away Saturday, May 18, 2013, at Tidewell Hospice House in Sarasota following a battle with brain cancer.

Richard was born May 30, 1942, in Bangor, the son of the late Elden and Anne (Hill) Benner. After graduating from Cape Elizabeth H.S. in Portland, he attended the University of Maine, graduating with a Master's Degree in Education. He later attended BTS and graduated in 1974 with a Masters of Divinity. He met his wife, Susan Gammon, in Boston and they were married in 1965 in Falmouth Foreside, ME. He served as minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota and also served in this same capacity at churches in Fort Myers, FL, Garden City, NY, and Omaha, NE. Along with his work for the church, he also supported many social causes during his life.

Richard, a passionate follower of renowned psychotherapist Carl Jung, taught classes in Sarasota based on Jung's work, attended the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland, and co-founded the C. G. Jung Society of Sarasota. He also was a dog lover, and would fondly recall memories of his late golden retriever "Josh", named after Civil War hero and Maine native, Joshua Chamberlain. He was an avid foreign film lover and would frequent the local video store even during the later stages of his illness.

Richard had a gift for writing and will always be remembered for the humanity, compassion, and wit he was able to convey to people through his work. Besides his written sermons, he also published books of poetry that centered on his

memories of Maine.

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Susan (Gammon) Benner; his sons, Christopher of San Diego, CA and Andrew of Sarasota, FL; his granddaughter, Sophia Benner; and many dear friends and relatives. *[Herald Tribune, 5/24-25/13]*

Roger Lowell Daum '13



Roger Daum passed away just a few days after Commencement (Fred Field)

Roger Daum, 75, died suddenly at home on Wednesday, June 26, 2013. Born in Strobelton, PA Roger lived a spirited and busy life filled with service to others, his continued love of learning, and the incredible joy that each day brings.

He attended Clarion University in Clarion, PA, earning a Bachelor of Science degree. He continued his studies at the University of Delaware and completed the Master of Science program. A true believer in education, he administered Environmental Outdoor Education programs in PA and DE and was a science supervisor for public schools in DE and VT.

Roger was an adjunct professor at Colby-Sawyer College and the Community College of Vermont and a member of the U.S. Army

Reserve, in which he served for over twenty years.

Fulfilling a lifelong dream, he earned a Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School in 2003 and was awarded the Doctorate of Ministry from BTS this past June. He served as Pastor of West Fairlee from 1994 and Post Mills from 2002 until his death.

Roger had enduring passion for all of God's creation and the fruits of the spirit and of the mind. Nothing made him so happy as the outpouring of God's love. He also had a fantastic admiration of and enjoyment in the element of surprise, living each day with a warm sense of humor—always ready for life's new adventures.

Music played an enjoyable role in Roger's life. An accomplished singer, Roger lent his voice to several vocal and theatre groups. He loved playing the trumpet with family and friends and was also a gifted piano and Clavinova player; even writing and performing original compositions.

Roger is survived by his partner for life, Martha Ann Daum, with whom he shared 51 years of love; his sister, his four children, ten grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. *[Valley News, 6/29/13]*

The Rev. Francis Groggett '94

The Rev. Francis "Frank" W. Groggett, 68, of Easthampton and Pastor of First Church in Ludlow, UCC, died Tuesday, June 25, 2013, in Northampton.

Frank was born July 10, 1944, in Boston, the son of the late Richard W., Sr. and Bessie (Howland) Groggett. He attended schools in Boston and was a graduate of Boston

English H.S. Rev. Groggett received his Masters of Divinity at BTS in 1994 and his bachelor's at University of Maine in 1997, and Spiritual Direction Certification at St. Thomas University, Miami, FL in 2001.

Prior to his ministry in Ludlow, Rev. Groggett was Senior Minister at Union Congregational Church, UCC, in West Palm Beach, FL; Interim Minister, Union Congregational Church, UCC, in Ellsworth, ME; Co-Minister, First Congregational, UCC, in Calais, ME; Associate Minister -Hampden Highlands, UMC, in Hampden, ME. He also held various leadership positions in industry and was a former owner and manager of a bed-and-breakfast inn in Wallingford, VT.

Frank enjoyed baking, cooking, music, all things technical, working with his hands and heart, carpentry, bike riding, and people. He will be remembered for his warm humor, his strong singing voice, his creativity, collegiality, zest for life, and his dedication to the church and to God.

Rev. Groggett is survived by his wife Rev. Darla Dee Ledger, Pastor of the First Congregational Church of Southampton, UCC, and his beloved children: four sons, twin sons Eli W. and Griffin T. Groggett at home, Scott Groggett and wife Christy of ID, and Todd Groggett and wife Fanny of HI; one daughter, Deborah Brown of FL; one brother, Robert Groggett of South Weymouth; six grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter. He was predeceased by one son, Obed. [*Daily Hampshire Gazette*, 7/10/13]

Bertram Otis Smith '61

Few individuals have the benefit of a life as full, as long, and as well-loved as Bertram Otis Smith, who bid farewell to the world on June 25, 2013, in Waterville. Bert's unfailing warmth, authentic charm, and enduring curiosity were treasured

by all who knew him. He was a wonderful husband, devoted father, adored brother, cherished uncle, and an unparalleled grandparent and great-grandparent.

Bert was born in Massena, NY on Dec. 11, 1920. He was the son of Charles Lynn Smith and Marie Frances Rundstrom Smith. He graduated from Eliot H.S. in 1939 and was a Marine in WWII. The events of Operation Watchtower had a profound impact on him.

Bertram married the love of his life, Nancy Elliot Welch, on Dec. 11, 1944, and they shared 58 very special years together. Bert would tell you that his life really began with his marriage to Nancy. Soon after their marriage, Bert graduated from Farmington State College and then in 1961 he graduated from BTS.

Bert and Nancy had four children whom they treasured. For many years, he and Nancy ran the Wainwright Farm in Killingly, CT where they were also foster parents for children with special needs. This important work for them endured for decades, and in total they hosted 38 children on the farm, valuing them as family.

Bert's hobbies included reading, enjoying classical music and public radio, gardening, wood carving, and home restoration. His Americana style of wood carving was a true talent and his favorite subjects were Santa Clause, birds, and gardeners.

Bert was predeceased by his wife, Nancy; his brothers, Earland Smith and Herman Smith; his sons, Wayne Elliot Smith and David Charles Smith; and his daughter-in-law, Joyce Ellen Smiley Smith. He is survived by his daughter, Marilyn Jane Smith, of Waterville; and his son, Gary Newell Smith, and his wife, Kristin Ann Holm, of Winslow; and his grandchildren. [*Morning Sentinel*, 6/27/13]

The Rev. Ian James Stewart '69

The Rev. Ian James Stewart, formerly of the British Merchant Marines, set sail on a new celestial course on Aug. 8, 2013, at Gosnell Memorial Hospice House in Scarborough with his loving family by his side.

Ian was born in London, England to James and Doris (Bentley) Stewart on July 9, 1933. He was raised in Beckenham, Kent, England and was evacuated to Lesmahagow, Scotland during early WWII.

While on the docks in Liverpool, Ian was drawn to the sea and in 1949 enrolled as a cadet on HMS Worcester, Thames Nautical Training College, an old replica of a sailing 'ship of the line.' After two years training he joined Thos. & Jno. Brocklebank Shipping Company as an apprentice for three years, trading between the UK and Calcutta, India. After his apprenticeship he sailed with several shipping companies, including Cunard, traveling to the Baltic, Mediterranean, Canada, and the U.S.

While on a visit with Bentley relatives in Barre, MA, he met his future wife June Berry (nee Longwell). They were married at Beckenham Congregational Church in 1957. Ian and June lived in Beckenham where they raised their three sons and where Ian continued his sea-going career, serving as Navigation Officer and obtaining his Master Mariner's Certificate in 1960.

Soon after, Ian 'swallowed the anchor' and settled into the family bakery business for the next three years. In 1963 he moved with his family to the U.S. and pursued his calling to enter church ministry. He received his Divinity Degree at BTS and in 1968 was an ordained minister in the United Church of

Christ. He served Maine churches in Sebec, Canaan, and Gray, as well as Lakeville, MA and Banstead, England. He also served as Associate Chaplain/Ship's Visitor with the Boston Seaman's Friend Society.

After retiring in 1998, Ian and June moved to Biddeford and became members of First Parish, UCC. Ian served interim pastorates at Second Christian Congregational in Kittery and North Congregational Church in Buxton, and as a volunteer pastoral visitor at SMMC.

Ian and June traveled annually to the UK and continental Europe; they especially loved Switzerland, Scotland, and the Yorkshire Dales in England.

Ian enjoyed sketching and fiddling and played for several seasons with the Merrimac Valley Philharmonic Orchestra and the Brockton Symphony Orchestra in MA. For the past four years he enjoyed playing Celtic music with the Fiddle-icious Orchestra.

Ian is survived by his wife of 56 years, June; three sons, Dana Stewart and his wife Peggy of Gray, the Rev. Dr. Marc Stewart and his wife, the Rev. Cheryl Stewart of Billings, MT, and James Stewart and his wife Barbara of Kingfield; six grandchildren; sister Muriel Aldcroft and brother Alan Stewart of England; and many relatives. *[Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram, 8/11/13]*

The Rev. Constance Huntley '96

The Rev. Connie Huntley died peacefully Sept. 3, 2013, at a Bangor nursing home after a long struggle with multiple health issues.

Connie was born on Aug. 5, 1944, in Gardiner, the daughter of Lawrence and Mildred (Dort) Grover. She was a longtime member of the Unitarian Church of Bangor.

Connie's passion for justice issues and her strong voice for the oppressed were heard throughout Bangor. She supported victims of domestic violence through Spruce Run, cared for those affected by HIV/AIDS through her work with The Eastern Maine Aids Network, supported the LGBT community through BAGLS, and worked for 35 years in the recovery community as a friend of Bill W. Along with several other welfare mothers, Connie fought for the right of welfare mothers to be accepted in and supported at the University of Maine in Orono.

Connie graduated from Colby H.S. in 1961 and the University of Maine at Orono in 1975. After many years as an office manager, Connie answered a call to ministry and entered BTS where she earned her Master of Divinity degree in 1996. She was ordained by the Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor in 2006 and served as the Pastor of the First Universalist Church of Pittsfield until her retirement.

Connie is survived by her beloved partner, Dorna Thomas of Winterport; her sons, Wendell Skidgell and wife, Mary, of Melrose, MA, and Patrick Skidgell of Bangor; brother Morgan Grover of Pacific Palisades, CA; her beloved grandchildren, Jason, Jessica, and Tori; and she will be greatly missed by her best friend, the Rev. Sue Davenport. Connie was predeceased by her parents; and two brothers, Donald and Patrick. *[Bangor Daily News, 9/4/13]*

William Walton Welch, Jr

William Walton Welch, Jr., 79, passed away Sept. 8, 2013, after a valiant two-year battle with cancer. He was born Feb. 17, 1934, in Norwood, MA to the late William

W. and Doris Florence Lucy (Dunn) Welch.

He graduated from Sharon H.S., Elon College in NC; attended BTS in Bangor and was ordained as a Lay Minister in the UCC. However, he found his ministry lay in working with emotionally disturbed people at the high school level. He served in the U.S. Army Reserves, married his loving wife Edna Morton in Roslindale, MA in 1955, and received his Master's Degree from Lesley College.

William worked in ME for two years then went to Newburyport, MA where he taught for eight years before leaving for Lexington, MA where he taught for over 20 years at Lexington H.S. William served as president of the Lexington Teachers Association on three different occasions during his time there. Working closely with the school committee, he helped develop negotiations that benefited all the children of Lexington. He also served many years as an elected town meeting member.

His loved the outdoors and for over 20 years he served as a volunteer ranger in the Olympic National Park in WA. Among many hobbies, gardening was his great delight. The Roach River in Greenville was a favorite spot for fishing, hiking, canoeing, tying flies, photography, and self-renewal.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Edna; children, William and Patricia Welch of Hudson, MA, and Christopher Welch of Greenville; half brother, Alvin and Paula Dunn of Depoe Bay, OR; brothers, Edward and Nancy Welch of Sharon, MA, Robert and June Welch of TX, Walter and Pat Welch of Deland, FL, and Francis and Pat Welch of Spring Hill, FL; sister, Lucille Carter of Edgewater, FL; his grandchildren; and his Scottie. *[BDN, 9/13/13]*

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THE CLASS OF 2013

(left to right, front to back)

Ann Johnston, Robert Sherman, Steven Lewis, Sherry Sivret, Irven Gammon, Kathy Genthner, Marvin Ellison, Susan Leary, Pamela Shellberg, Ron Baard, Harry Bennert, Roger Daum, Beth Hoffman, Linette George, Tim LeConey, T.J. Mack, Tom Fales, Joseph Dressler, Katie Benedict, Jim Mello, Macauley Lord, Tricia Carver-Watson, Linda Costelloe, Bernice Martin, Carolyn Neighoff, Linda Mawhorter, Cindy Lufkin, Alison Barker, Sandra Horne, Alisabeth MacLeod, Stephen MacLeod, Sheila Seekins, Jeff McIlwain, Allison Gammons, Judy Ahles, Lyn Kellis, Dominic Barbieri, Terry Given, Maureen Steer, Jen Curran, Patti Stratton, Sharon Piantedosi, Leland Philbrick, Jennifer Reed, Patricia Atherton Marsden, Patricia Sprague, Robert Ross