

# Best of BTSR



BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY *at* RICHMOND

## Dear BTSR Family,

As I begin the second year of my service as your president, I continue to remember our journey from those early days of BTSR's beginning in 1991 until this very moment. This school, birthed with hope and prophetic imagination in a moment of denominational despair and transition, has now hosted 27 opening school convocations, celebrated 25 commencements, held almost 54 meetings of our Board of Trustees, and most importantly, has taught and nurtured over 750 students. They are ministers like Mary Carol Anderson, a BTSR graduate who is now youth minister back at the church where she grew up, First Baptist of Greenville, SC – and they are serving in so many other ways and places, as chaplains and missionaries, pastors and professors.

Even as it has been my privilege to witness their ministry, so I encourage you to read this newsletter and join me seeing how BTSR is at work in the world – through its alumni/ae and current students, its courses and its commitments. We have much good news to share, and here we tell a small part of the larger story of the faithfulness of generations of learners.

We've been blessed with many faithful friends and supporters over the years, and we thank you. Your annual support allows us to continue our mission – to provide advanced theological education and training for effective leadership in the various ministries of the church for those men and women who are called and committed to Christian ministry. Your support will now help us educate the 64 students who are currently enrolled, providing resources for them to pursue their journey and then give back in more ways than ever to communities and people they serve. I hope we can count on you again this year.

I thank you for your support of BTSR and look forward to our continuing partnership.

With gratitude,

**Linda McKinnish Bridges**  
*President*



**Mary Carol Anderson, M.Div. '08,**  
**with President Linda McKinnish Bridges**



## From Your Board of Trustees Chair

On behalf of the Board of Trustees at BTSR, let me encourage you to read through this newsletter and see for yourself the wonderful things our students and alums are up to! I was recently on campus teaching a D.Min. seminar, and found the quality of our students, the depth of their gifts, and the spirit in which they approached ministry and learning to be inspiring. Our students are having a significant impact in their churches and communities.

Thank you for your part in helping us make this remarkable experience more available and accessible. We appreciate so very much your encouragement and support for the work and ministry of BTSR.

**Bill Wilson**  
**Chair, BTSR Board of Trustees**

# A Model of Collaboration

The religious liberty course brought together a rich mix of resources from across Baptist life.

- **Collaboration Expands Sister Schools' Course Offerings:** Student scholars were enrolled from the John Leland Center for Theological Studies and the divinity schools of Wake Forest University, Campbell University, and Gardner-Webb University
- **Collaboration Takes Many Forms:** As a B TSR Connects offering combining residential and non-residential study, the course created a unique web of experiences (short-term residential study, experiential pilgrimage, cloud-based learning) that deepened the traditional classroom model and afforded a premier experience of face time with teaching staff and fellow classmates as well as hands on learning at each historical site.
- **Collaboration Offers Rich Instruction:** Instructors were experts from many disciplines. Bill J. Leonard, noted Baptist historian and founding dean of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, was the lead professor. Key instructors for the travel segment were Corey Walker, Vice President and Dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, Fred Anderson, Executive Director Emeritus of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society and Nathan Taylor, current Executive Director of the VBHS
- **Collaboration Provides Funding:** The generosity of long-time B TSR partners underwrote the course.
  - o Major grant given by the Charles B. Keesee Educational Fund
  - o Student scholarships provided by Richmond congregations River Road Church, Baptist, and First Baptist Church

# Religious Liberty Course Creates Connections

*Through this course, I was able to reclaim my Baptist heritage, and I am proud to be a Baptist once more. I am aware now of the tremendous sacrifices of those who have gone before us, and a desire to continue and fulfill their legacies has been ignited within me.*

— Evaluation from student in the B TSR religious liberty course, summer 2018

A collaborative course offered by B TSR this summer went beyond the traditional classroom, connecting diverse people, ideas and resources to provide an inclusive picture of the story of religious liberty in the US. "A Shelter for Conscience" was team-taught by noted Baptist historian Bill J. Leonard and a diverse group of instructors, and featured a week-long pilgrimage to key religious liberty sites in Virginia and Washington, DC.

Besides the week of travel, students attended sessions in a virtual classroom and had individual conferences via Zoom videoconferencing. The short in-residence requirement allowed B TSR to offer the unique "B TSR Connects" course to students from other CBF-related seminaries.

"This course exceeded our expectations in every way," said Tracy Hartman, Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean. "Built on collaborative relationships and incorporating a combination of residential, experiential, and cloud learning, the course brought together students from four CBF seminaries with a variety of perspectives and life experiences. We all were enriched by the opportunity to make this journey together."

The seminary plans to offer a B TSR Connects course on racial justice in summer 2019, featuring a team of faculty, a collaborative approach, flexible structure and experiential learning about race in the former capital of the Confederacy.



**Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, was a lecturer for the B TSR class. She joined the group on its journey to religious liberty sites in Virginia and Washington, DC. Read her reflections on the pilgrimage on the BJC website: [bjconline.org/a-tour-through-history-raises-questions-for-our-time/](http://bjconline.org/a-tour-through-history-raises-questions-for-our-time/)**

# Class of 2018 is Honored at B TSR Commencement

B TSR celebrated its 26th Commencement on May 26 at Richmond's First Baptist Church, conferring degrees on 19 students who we now proudly call alumni and alumnae. Corey D.B. Walker, vice president and dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, delivered a resounding commencement address. The seminary conferred five Doctor of Ministry degrees; eleven Master of Divinity degrees; and one each Master of Theological Studies, Master in Christian Ministry and Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies.



We salute the Class of 2018 and can't wait to hear and see the impact they will make! Here's what three of our recent graduates are already doing:

- Jerusha Moses, M.Div. '08, D.Min '18, has taken on a dual ministry role as a prison chaplain and a minister to children and families.
- Miriam Dakin, M.Div. '03, D.Min '18, continues her work with hospice ministry.
- Tanya Parks, M.Div. '18, continues her work as a CBF missionary in Slovakia.

# BTSR Advancement by the Numbers

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

Gracious thanks to the 357 donors who chose to partner with BTSR during the 2017-18 fiscal year. Your gifts to BTSR provide resources to create a meaningful and practical educational experience for our students that incorporates spiritual development, provides cross-cultural learning and equips students for ministry by offering practical experience in churches and other ministry settings.

Thanks to your generosity, gifts totaling \$1,638,295 were received by the BTSR Advancement Office over the course of the year. Many thanks to our alumni/alumnae who continue to give back, those individual donors who continue to believe in our mission, and the church partners who continue to support us. As always, we are grateful for our Trustee Leadership giving, our BGAV partnership, our CBF partnership and the foundations who believe in and support the work we do. Your impact is felt around the country and around the world, and we thank you. Because of you, our current seminary students will be able to answer their calls to ministry.

# BTSR Recommits to Collaboration with Its Consortium Partners



The presence and welcome of the Richmond Theological Consortium played a key role in Richmond being chosen as the site of the brand-new Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in 1991. The seminary's founders saw the RTC as a supportive setting to live out values of racial and ecumenical diversity. As the RTC prepares to mark its 50th anniversary in 2019, BTSR, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University (STVU), and Union Presbyterian Seminary (UPSem) recently agreed to explore ways to deepen that collaborative relationship.

**Read more on our website: [BTSR.edu/btsr-and-partners-renew-commitment-to-collaboration](http://BTSR.edu/btsr-and-partners-renew-commitment-to-collaboration)**

# News from the Admissions Office & Fall Enrollment



Students in Dr. Tracy Hartman's course "Exploring Ministerial Identity" held class together in Richmond over the weekend of August 17, after starting their studies online the previous week. The first-year class for master's students helps them explore their calls and look toward their ministry career.



During the week of August 20, nine D.Min. students studied in residence at BTSR. The diverse group hails from as near as Richmond and as far as Myanmar, and was taught this summer by Dr. Bill Wilson, founder of the Center for Healthy Churches and chair of the BTSR Board of Trustees.



New Student Orientation was held on September 6-7, and we welcome this year's new class, which includes 20 new master's and doctoral students (pictured: master's students). BTSR has a total of 64 students enrolled for our fall semester, and we are grateful to those of you who referred students to our programs.



At a worship service during orientation, president Linda McKinnish Bridges reflected on the towel of servant leadership as the symbol of the seminary, and then invited students to take part in a footwashing ritual (Pictured: Hogan Brock).

# Alums and Faculty Reconnect at Retreat

## Event Results in New Alumni/ae Council

Thanks to Beth Newman, the Eula Mae and John Baugh Professor of Theology and Ethics, and a grant secured from Wabash College, B TSR held its first ever Alumni/ae-Faculty Retreat on May 24-25 at Shalom House Retreat Center just outside Richmond.

"Remembering the Future" brought together 20 B TSR alums to meet with faculty and staff for an intensive two days of reflection on how B TSR could integrate its most important assets, alumni and alumnae, back into the life of the school to enrich its work. We are so grateful for those folks who set aside time to participate, as well as travel to and from this gathering. (Hats off to Dan Shumacher, who traveled from Colorado Springs, CO!)

As a result of the retreat, several alums agreed to help form and serve on a B TSR Alumni/ae Council: Donna Britt, M.Div. '95; Miriam Dakin, M.Div. '03, D.Min '18; Thomas Ficklin, M.Div. '14; Tim Mull, M.Div. '14; Greg Randall, M.Div. '03, D.Min '12; and Carolyn Williams, M.Div. '14. Members of the team held their first meeting with the faculty and president in September and began laying the groundwork for the alumni/ae organization.

Council member Donna Britt said, "I hope the alumni/ae association will help the seminary provide courage, strength, connection, and hope to alumni who need it, and be a reminder that this is a great place to send their offerings, to put in their wills, and to send students who are interested in a meaningful profession."

We are so grateful for the desire and willingness of these graduates to help alumni/ae stay connected to each other and to the seminary. Stay tuned for more information regarding this new endeavor.

You are also invited to send your thoughts or suggestions as we formulate our Alumni/ae Council to [mstrader@btsr.edu](mailto:mstrader@btsr.edu). We want your input to make sure this organization meets your needs.

We are excited for the leadership this group will give to all of our alumni and alumnae!



**Alumni/ae Council members Miriam Dakin, Tim Mull and Carolyn Williams**

## From the Interim Vice President of Advancement

Dear B TSR Family,

I hope you've enjoyed reading through this piece and seeing familiar faces, hearing about our recent events, learning more about our students and seeing the impact our graduates make. Be sure to visit our website, [www.btsr.edu](http://www.btsr.edu), and scroll down to the bottom of the page to click on the links for our social media outlets. All of these resources will allow you to keep up to date with news and events surrounding B TSR. Our B TSR family continues to make their voices heard across the country and around the globe!

Would you consider making a gift to B TSR which will help us continue the theological education our students deserve? There are several ways to make your gift. You may use the enclosed reply envelope to mail your donation, or visit our website to make your secure gift online: [btsr.edu/givenow](http://btsr.edu/givenow). Your support helps us accomplish our mission! Make your gift today and join the many others who make B TSR part of their annual giving plan.

*Your Support is Needed and Appreciated!*

Sincerely,

**Michael Strader**  
**Interim Vice President of Advancement**

## B TSR Alumni and Alumnae Make an Impact Around the World You Make Us Proud!

B TSR is proud of her graduates, now more than 750 strong! They are serving in the US and far beyond: in local congregations, social service agencies, educational institutions, chaplaincies, on the mission field, and in many other settings. Here are just a few examples of their work

- **Brian C. Hughes, M.Div. '02**, is Senior Pastor at Powhatan Community Church, serving multiple locations and parishioners in Virginia.
- **Jon Singletary, M.Div. '99**, is Dean of the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University.
- **Elizabeth Mangham Lott, M.Div. '08**, recently celebrated five years as Senior Pastor of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, LA.
- **Cindy Ring Ruble (M.Div. '97) and Eddy Ruble (M.Div. '98)**, are CBF field personnel serving in Malaysia; Cindy is an advocate for women and children, and Eddy is CBF's International Disaster Response Coordinator.
- **Jennifer "Helms" Jarrell, M.Div. '03, and Greg Jarrell, M.Div. '05**, live and serve in an neighborhood-rooted intentional community called The Family Tree in West Charlotte, NC.

**Visit our Facebook page for more alumni updates and features! And please let us know what you are up to by submitting an Alumni Update Form at [BTSR.edu/alumni-updates/](http://BTSR.edu/alumni-updates/)**