SERVICE OF
DEDICATION AND
CELEBRATION
HELD APRIL 19

It dawned as a beautiful morning in Austin. The sun shone brightly, the temperature was mild, and evidence of a spring in full bloom was all around. It was a day fit for celebration. The event about to take place had been dreamed of and prayed about for many months.

As guests arrived at 7640 Guadalupe Street for the Dedication Service at the new location of Austin Graduate School of Theology (AGST), they immediately noticed the attractive landscaping, well-manicured lawn and freshly-restored building. It was hard to believe that just eight months earlier the building had stood forlornly vacant and dilapidated from long years of use. However, in just a short time it had been transformed into a place well suited for a school of theology (See “First Impression” on page 2.).

During a dinner on September 28, 2007, the AGST Board of Trustees formally announced that it had sold the school’s building at 1909 University Avenue, had purchased a building at 7640 Guadalupe Street, and was initiating a three-year, $3 million Building the Dream Capital Campaign. The Summer/Fall 2007 issue of the Update provided an overview of the Campaign (See http://www.austingrad.edu/news_update.html). A total of $1.2 million toward the goal had already been committed as pledges and gifts by 100% of the trustees, administration, faculty and staff. Two lead gifts from others were also included.

— continued on page 2
Hi Michael!

I want to tell you, again, of my very positive response to the new AGST facilities. The first impression I had—surely formed by my visits to the former AGST building—was one of spaciousness! You seem to be in possession of what seems an "enormous" amount of simple space. There are halls, rooms, offices ... all of that, which, for me, raises the question, "what will you do with this?" How many students could really fill this place?

My second impression was one of "light." There were wonderful windows in all directions. As I looked around, I thought of the many seminars I have been in. This seemed to be the brightest and most inviting place that I have ever seen.

I want to congratulate AGST for this move and the new facility. I am very impressed and happy about it. This is just a great place to be, to study and to work!

Maurice
deterrent, the planners and dreamers kept the faith. This effort lends credence to future missions and goals. The lesson learned is to never doubt God’s hand when Christ-like people keep the faith.”

Building the Dream has been an exciting adventure and has received much attention. However, the real focus of Austin Grad continues to be serving its students within the guiding principles of the school’s mission. The intent of the original founders to teach the Bible through the Bible Chair system to students at the University of Texas is still intact. The mission broadened over the years, as a new generation of visionary leaders added accredited bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Bible and ministry. Although the University of Texas disbanded the Bible Chair system in the mid-1980s, Austin Grad continues to reach out to all who desire to join us on our adventure of faith seeking understanding.

Occupying the new facilities was a giant step forward. However, we continue to dream about how to better educate and equip Christian servants for ministry and avenues of service to strengthen the church. Snow said, “Seeing the new building in action puts reality where dreams once were forming and is a blessing that will keep on giving. Generous gifts of time, resources and money will not be forgotten. It has been a significant effort and God has smiled on it. HE knew what we were capable of doing. Many thanks to all who saw a vision and had the faith to make it a reality.” AG

God-kissed

Editor’s note: The following was part of Dr. Terry Koonce’s closing remarks at the AGST Service of Dedication.

Austin Graduate School of Theology (AGST) is a most unique educational institution and seminary. It is blessed with a world class faculty, an attentive, effective and forward thinking administration and an extraordinary student body that redefines diversity with respect to age, gender, ethnicity and religious heritage.

The Board of Trustees of this special school stepped out in faith: and “dared” to undertake a three year campaign to raise three million dollars, which, with one million dollars from the sale of AGST’s previous building, would enable the purchase and renovation of a new building to meet current and future needs for the next decade or more. Little did we know what God had in store!

In only eight months, the goal was exceeded by ten percent which just about matched the increased cost of renovation! In my own fund raising experience, and that of many with whom I have shared this story, such a result is just unheard of! But the seemingly impossible is possible with God! My wife would say that this entire undertaking has been “God-kissed”. And we give Him all the glory and praise.

But He may not be through. AGST needs to complete the chapel and expand the library as well as endow the offering of the Master of Divinity degree. And we plan to just keep on following Him until He achieves these goals. We, the Trustees, as well as the faculty and administration, are honored and humbled to be about the Father’s business in advancing His Kingdom on this earth.

We sincerely thank all of you who, as donors, allowed God to work through you to achieve this amazing result.
Diverse Students Seeking Same Goal

The three students were not at all alike, yet share one thing in common. Humberto Bustamante, Ashley Gay and Ron Hall reflect the diversity of the school. Yet, together they have discovered something refreshing at Austin Grad.

Although their lives were separated by age, ethnicity, gender and different areas of interest, they converged in Austin through their common desire for more Bible knowledge and theological understanding. Here they discovered more than knowledge and understanding. They found a community formed by professors, students and staff that exhibit Christian compassion in a demanding academic setting.

Ashley graduated from Harding University in December. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Theater with a minor in English. In her twenties, Ashley is shaping her vocational vision.

Dr. Ron Hall recently retired as a cardiologist in San Marcos, Texas. He serves as an elder for the Holland Street Church of Christ. With his medical career behind him, many options were open to Ron for his retirement.

Of the three, Humberto probably took the most indirect route to Austin Grad. Several years ago his drug habit led to the loss of his business and his family. After his last stint in prison, Humberto was homeless and lived under an overpass near Austin Grad for a while. Unlike that of Ashley and Ron, Humberto’s future was bleak.

During his time of homelessness, Humberto found assistance from the Salvation Army and the University Avenue Church of Christ. Two years ago he entered a rehab center. There he was told to ask, to seek and to knock at God’s door of grace. “At first, I didn’t believe any of this,” Humberto said. “Then I began to pray, not for a house or car, but for knowledge and wisdom.”

Ashley, Humberto and Ron arrived at Austin Grad at about the same time, but from different directions. While Humberto’s life had been directionless, Ashley was deliberately mapping her route forward. Ron, with the benefit of retirement, was changing direction.

Ashley has been invited to be a member of a mission team to the Czech Republic. “I strongly desire to present the Word to these people,” Ashley said, “but I want undeniable passion to meet with unequalled preparation. Before specializing in the humanities (toward professorship) or heading to Europe (toward missionary work), I desire to develop a solid foundation in Biblical Studies.”

Ron said he has seen the level of biblical knowledge diminish in the church. “There’s a great need,” he said, “for more meat and more informed emotions.” He first became acquainted with Austin Grad when he heard AGST professor, Michael Weed, speak at a seminar in Dallas several years ago. As Ron listened he said, “Here’s a man who knows what he’s talking about.”

A few years later, Ron’s son Todd, became a student at Austin Grad (BA, 1999 and MATS, 2002). “I was very impressed with what Todd was learning,” Ron said. “It wasn’t just ivory tower stuff, because Todd was able to bring that knowledge to life in practical ways for the Holland Street church.”

While a student at Austin Grad, Todd’s wife Jenny became seriously ill and died within days. Ron continues to be overcome with emotion when he tells how the people of Austin Grad were a family to Todd.

While living under a bridge, Humberto began seeking God. Along that path, he found Austin Grad. Fellow students introduced Humberto to the Freedom Church. Sponsored by the Westover Hills Church of Christ, Freedom Church is an outreach to former prisoners who are being reintegrated into public life. Humberto is merging his academic experience with real life in the context of church. He’s making a difference in the lives of ex-prisoners.

Ashley, Ron and Humberto agree that the credentials and outstanding instruction by the faculty makes Austin Grad very attractive from an academic perspective. They also agree that part of its uniqueness is in the melding of diverse students into a community of compassion.

These three students are representative of the diverse student body at Austin Grad. Here they not only have the opportunity to benefit from outstanding biblical and theological instruction, but to apply it in situations crying for Christian compassion. AG
Class of 2008 Recognized During Graduation Ceremony

Seven Austin Grad undergraduate candidates and six graduate candidates were recommended for graduation on Sunday, May 18 at University Avenue Church of Christ. For one undergraduate student, it had been a long journey. Kevin Castello started college 25 years ago. With support from his family and constant encouragement from the Austin Grad family he had fulfilled his dream of earning a college diploma.

Kevin’s is just one of twelve diverse stories that could be told by the group of graduates pictured below. One is a veteran of Desert Storm. Another holds a Ph.D. in math from the University of Texas. Another has been accepted into a religious studies Ph.D. program. Still another has moved back to Idaho to work with Boise State University and offer service to the church. Within days, two of the graduates were in Bosnia teaching and serving with Come Before Winter, a ministry serving foreign missionary women. All of the graduates share in common a desire to be better servants in God’s kingdom.

Dr. David Worley, chancellor of Austin Grad, delivered the commencement address. His exhortation was based on 2 Corinthians 4:5 and 1 Timothy 6:20-21. “It is not enough to know or even understand,” said Worley. “It has been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But a lot of knowledge can also be a dangerous thing.” Worley then told the stories of two men who excelled in biblical studies, but ended on different paths. One was Saul of Tarsus. The other was Joseph Stalin. Reminding the students before him of the depth of knowledge they had gained through their studies at Austin Grad he then said, “What you now have is a trust. You are a steward. You have stewardship of a secret that is now out of the bag…. You have been given by the Father above a precious trust. Be a faithful trustee.”

The Austin Grad Class of 2008 has been sent forth. “When they come in, they’re ‘adopted,’” said Celeste Scarborough, Austin Grad registrar. “The family at Austin Grad,” she continued, “envelops them with love and hope and nurturing. It leaves sort of an ‘empty nest’ syndrome because I’ve grown to love and admire these precious servants of God!” Although each class is missed when it moves on, we also anticipate much fruit being reaped from their efforts to faithfully practice the faith which was better informed and strengthened while they studied with us. AG

Worley Recognized with Honor

At the conclusion of the 2008 Austin Grad commencement service, Dr. Terry Koonce, chairman of the AGST Board of Trustees, made a special presentation recognizing Worley’s contribution to Austin Grad in particular and Christian education, the church and world missions in general. “The ability of a seminary to provide excellent education for its students,” said Koonce, “is strengthened by the quality of its library.”

“Because of its location, the library at our new building stands,” Koonce said, “as a focal point.” He continued, “This is appropriate since our library is an essential part of our mission to educate Christian servants and edify churches.” He then noted that Dr. Worley was unable to be at the Service of Dedication for the new AGST building on April 19 when it was announced that the library was being dedicated in his honor. Koonce continued, “Likewise, it is appropriate that our library bear the name of one so committed to Christian education.” AG
Affirmation of Commitments

Editor's note: President Reid asked Michael Weed to make a statement of commitments on behalf of the administration, staff and faculty at the Service of Dedication on April 19. In collaboration with faculty colleagues, Michael presented the following statement.

I have been requested to present a statement of commitments for the administration, the staff and the faculty. Let me ask each of you to listen carefully to these commitments. You will all be given the opportunity of affirming them with the administration, staff and faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology if you feel so inclined.

— Today we commit ourselves to honor the memory and vision of those who have gone before us — some born in the century before last — servants including GHP Showalter (b.1870), Charles Roberson (b.1879), AB Cox (b.1884), Pat Harrell, Jim Weber, Claude Hocott and others.

— We commit ourselves to keep the school, its board, president, staff, administration, faculty and students in prayer.

— We commit ourselves to employ the ministry of scholarship and teaching to strengthen and enrich the life of the church and the discipleship of individual Christians.

— We commit ourselves to encourage our students by word and deed to devote themselves to faith, learning, and service and to seek their place in the body of Christ.

— We commit ourselves to embody the best of the Restoration tradition of Christian faith and practice . . . while welcoming all those who confess Christ as Lord as well as all who desire to learn of Christ.

— We commit ourselves to seek to be wise, trustworthy and encouraging voices in times of difficulty and confusion.

— And we commit ourselves to use our talents and resources to preserve the faith for those who will come after us.

Having heard and understood these commitments, will you now affirm them by together saying, “We will with God’s help.” May God bless the promises we have made here this day, the 19th of April, in the year of our Lord, 2008.
GOAL FOR 2008 - 2009 ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN ANNOUNCED

Although the Building the Dream Capital Campaign received more attention during the past fiscal year, the annual fund continued to be the most foundational for the school’s work. “The annual fund is very important,” said Kirk Eason, Austin Grad’s Director of Development. “It allows us to maintain our excellent faculty, and provide scholarships to deserving students.”

The School’s budget is met through three sources: tuition, board-approved draws on the school’s endowment and unrestricted annual fund donations from our friends. The goal for our 2008-2009 Annual Fund Campaign is $420,000 and runs concurrently with our fiscal year (August 1 to July 31).

The Annual Fund provides 40% of our operating budget. “This year the Fund takes on special significance,” Eason said. “The move to the new facility, growth of the student body and decreased income from investments means that more income will need to come from annual fund donors.”

Austin Grad continues to be blessed by churches and individuals who support its mission. These faithful friends and partners help the school continue its kingdom work. As a result, Christian servants are educated and equipped for ministry. Likewise, churches are edified and assisted in their effort to continue all that Jesus began to do and teach. Your generous support of our 2008 – 2009 Annual Fund Campaign is greatly appreciated.

HOW TO GIVE TO
Austin Grad

Annual Fund Campaign
The annual fund campaign runs from August 1 to July 31 each year. Our present goal is $420,000, which will help keep student costs down, provide scholarships for deserving students and help maintain our excellent faculty. Please prayerfully consider how you may join us in this effort.

Keepers of the Flame
Keepers of the Flame support the school with an annual, one-time gift. Gifts of $10 and up have been received. The average one-time gift in 2006-2007 was $262. These gifts can be given by check or credit card.

Light Bearers
Light Bearers sustain the school and its mission through monthly contributions. Last year, monthly gifts ranged from $10 to over $1000 with an average monthly gift of $102. These gifts can be given by credit card, check or monthly bank draft.

Pay for a Day
Making a one time gift of $300 or committing $300 given over a period of up to one year allows you to honor or memorialize an individual or group with the Pay for a Day giving option. Instruction on a day you select will be provided in recognition of an individual or group of your choice. They will be notified about your gift and a poster acknowledging the honoree will be placed outside our front offices on the specified day. The poster will then be sent to those you chose to honor or to the family of the one you chose to memorialize.

Pay for a Week
Pay for a Week of instruction is also an option. A week of instruction is $2,100. As with Pay for a Day, Pay for a Week can be either a one-time donation or a commitment over a one-year period. Acknowledgement is the same as described above in Pay for a Day.

Endowments
For many years Austin Grad has been blessed with people who believe in its mission. Through generous donors the school has built an endowment valued at more than $4 million. Annual draws on these funds are overseen by the Board of Trustees and cover about one-third of our annual operating costs. Gifts to the endowment fund truly are gifts that keep on giving. One may endow a scholarship, teaching chair or other service of the school.

Planned Giving
Planned Giving options are designed to help individuals and couples redirect money to institutions of their choice that would otherwise be taken in taxes. Planned gifts can take the form of a will, trust, insurance policy, retirement plan or a life-income gift. Please see your financial advisor concerning how you may benefit from these different options.

Matching Gifts
Many companies will match employee gifts to Austin Graduate School of Theology. Check with your human resources department to learn if your company is a matching gift company.

If you have any questions please contact Kirk Eason, Director of Development and Public Relations, at keason@austingrad.edu, or 512-476-2772. AG
WITH
GRATEFUL
APPRECIATION
AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THOSE WHO KEEP THE FLAME ALIGHT

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*This list represents gifts given from November 2007-June 2008*

*Deceased. The Austin Grad family extends its sympathy.*
On September 28, 2007, during a dinner hosted by Austin Graduate School of Theology, the Board of Trustees announced that it was initiating a three-year, $3 million capital campaign called Building the Dream. That was the projected amount needed to complete the purchase price for our new building and the necessary remodeling. The remodeling project was already underway through funds made available by a line of credit.

The entire Austin Grad family—from the trustees to the administration to the faculty and staff—had already set the pace for a great start. Their gifts and pledges combined with two lead gifts from anonymous donors totaled more than $1 million.

Throughout the fall and into early 2008, the school continued to receive contributions from churches, foundations, alumni and friends. However, leaders knew that interest on the line of credit would begin mounting. Therefore, a strategy was developed to identify one or more major donors as soon as possible.

With a slowing economy and escalating energy prices, there was some concern about the progress of the Campaign. However, God is not limited by human concerns. In the first few months of 2008, the school learned of two forthcoming major gifts.

Iva Lea Barton, a long time friend of Austin Grad, pledged to donate a total of $1 million over the course of the Building the Dream Capital Campaign. With this generous gift, we were feeling much better. However, another major gift would be most helpful.

It was not long until another longtime friend of the school announced a gift of $1 million. The family of O.J. and the late Ann Weber offered to make the second and final installment of a $2 million commitment to Austin Grad in the Weber’s estate plan. The first installment had been a $1 million gift in 1999 to establish the James Lee Weber Endowment Fund. This was given in memory of their son and the husband of board member Karen Weber.

Carol Ann Paddock, daughter of O.J. and Ann Weber, was instrumental in seeing that the most recent Weber family gift came to fruition. She wrote: “Bob and I enjoyed the dedication service last month and it was inspiring to see how far the school has come. This accomplishment reminds me of one of my favorite quotes—‘A task without a vision is drudgery, a vision without a task is a dream, a task with a vision is victory.’ I realize that the mission and vision of Austin Grad are ongoing. However, every phase has been guided by those with Godly vision and willingness to undertake the task.”

Whether large gifts or small, all that has been given to Building the Dream has honored God and enabled the school to better fulfill its kingdom mission for years to come. Chairman Terry Koonce captured the essence of all these gifts when he said, “In only eight months the goal was exceeded by ten percent, which just about matched the increased cost of renovation! In my own fund-raising experience, and that of many with whom I have shared this story, such a result is just unheard of! But the seemingly impossible is possible with God.”

Throughout its history, the Lord has blessed Austin Grad with men and women of vision who have sustained the school through their leadership, service and generous gifts. We thank God for all those who have been and for those who will become our friends and partners in such a great mission. To Him be the glory!  AG
2008 Sermon Seminar Praised as One of the Best Ever

For over a quarter of a century, one of the annual high points at Austin Grad is the Sermon Seminar. For four days in May, preachers, teachers and church leaders from across the country and around the world assemble to study, worship and share in Christian fellowship.

Words of affirmation were plentiful when the 2008 program concluded. John Harp, who has served the Sunset Ridge Church of Christ in San Antonio for more than 30 years, said, “The Sermon Seminar was a HOME RUN!” He added, “Thanks for everything you did to make the Seminar program one of the very best ever!”

Shane Hines commented, “There is no way for any preacher to attend your seminar without going home standing a little taller and preaching a little bolder.” Hines preaches for the Highland Hills Church of Christ in Tulla Homa, Tennessee.

Chris Vidocavich, who preaches for the Chandler Street Church of Christ in Kilgore, Texas, said, “The Sermon Seminar is by far the best seminar I have attended in helping me to preach the Word of God. I will use the information and knowledge I gained for years to come.”

When asked what caused this Seminar to get such a positive response, President Stan Reid replied, “Our speakers did an exceptional job of melding outstanding biblical scholarship and practical application for preaching, teaching and ministry in general. Beyond this,” Reid added, “the participants established a wonderful Christian camaraderie early on that set the stage for a very positive and supportive atmosphere.”

Others commented that being in the new building was a tremendous asset for the Seminar. “Your new building is great!” said Robert Barkley, a long-time attendee and an elder for the Robinson Church of Christ in Robinson, Texas. Barkley noted another positive development. “It is our hope that AGST will continue to lead the way for more interdenominational dialogue and interaction,” said Barkley. “I was pleased to see,” he added, “some present from churches other than the Church of Christ.” Barkley’s observation affirms Austin Grad’s commitment to keep strong biblical teaching as the core of its curriculum and service to the church. President Reid said, “It is very satisfying to see that our school’s emphasis on careful and faithful instruction in the Christian Scriptures and faith is respected and sought by those from other traditions.”

Of course, much credit is due to the outstanding presentations made by all the speakers. This year, keynote speakers were Mark Hamilton, Rick Marrs, Jeff Peterson, Dwight Robarts and Eddie Sharp. Others making presentations included Charlie Johanson, Brooke Hollingsworth, Allan McNicol, Matt Soper, Michael Weed and Woody Woodrow. However, in the end, all glory is to God who uses the Word as a means to reveal himself and his ways and draw us into a covenant relationship. Keynote speakers scheduled for the 2009 Sermon Seminar will be Stan Reid of Austin Grad, Harold Shank of Oklahoma Christian University, Tim Willis of Pepperdine University and Ben Witherington of Asbury Theological Seminary. AG
PROFESSOR SHIPP LEADS PROJECT FOR NEW HYMNAL

Mark Shipp, professor of Old Testament at Austin Grad, conceived and is editing a unique project that aims to set all 150 Psalms tometrical lyrics and music, and provide a commentary by Old Testament scholars for each psalm. An initial publication, Timeless: Ancient Psalms for the Church Today, is a prototype for the larger project.

In the prototype, Psalms 1-20 are set to music with accompanying commentary synopses. Ultimately, the musical compositions will be accompanied with new translations of each psalm and full commentaries provided by a number of Old Testament scholars. Composers reference the scholars' notes in their compositions, "creating insightful and fresh interpretations of each psalm in a musical setting,” explains Shipp. In addition, Timeless seeks to bridge the gap between contemporary and traditional worship styles. Two or three musical settings will be provided for each psalm: a more traditional setting, a contemporary one and sometimes a chant.

The project received a very positive reception when Shipp unveiled Timeless during a Christian Scholars Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Paul Watson, a well-known Old Testament scholar from Durham, N.C. was in Nashville and commented on the Timeless project. “The time has come for the fresh translations, commentaries and musical settings for the Psalms that Timeless provides,” Watson said. “Congregations and individual Christians everywhere will be enriched by singing and reflecting upon this wellspring of Christian worship. Mark Shipp and his co-workers deserve our gratitude and support for their efforts.”

The hymnal is a joint publication of Austin Grad’s Christian Studies Press and Austin Christian Acappella Music (ACAM). James Tackett, owner of ACAM and the well-known Paperless Hymnal, and Cynthia Agnell, Shipp’s assistant for the project, have provided crucial services to its realization.

Timeless is available for $5.00 per copy. It can also be purchased with a CD of audio files (MIDI and MP3) to help learn the songs, for an additional $3.00. To order your copy please e-mail Renee Kennell at rkennell@austingrad.edu or call her at 512-476-2772. AG

A DECADE OF GREAT IMPRESSIONS

May 19, 1997: Joe Baisden was driving. He was taking me to my first ever Sermon Seminar at AGST. As we pulled into the parking lot, Joe registered jubilant surprise at finding a spot: the first of many important lessons I would learn about and from AGST over the next decade.

I was impressed—not because the facilities and technology were all that great. I was impressed with the people. From the kitchen crew to the main lecturers, everyone was there to serve; to be accessible. Speakers stayed to hear other speakers. The speeches had depth—solid applicability. No grandstanding, no wares hawking, no ax grinding—just skilled textual exegesis by respected experts. Audience members were free to ask questions—intelligent questions that received reasoned and useful answers.

I was hooked. I even bought the T-shirt.

After years of ongoing excellence and ever shrinking parking lots, AGST asked me to teach an undergraduate course in the fall of 2006. I was deeply honored (and slightly anxious about the parking situation). I was also intimidated. Allan

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Preparing for the Lord’s Supper

Editor’s Note: The following essay was contributed by Greg Fleming, who is the preaching minister for the North A Church of Christ in Midland, Texas.

The Austin Graduate School of Theology, “which exists to promote knowledge, understanding and practice of the Christian faith,” in part fulfills its mission by supplying written resources for the life of the church. Each of the four full-time Austin Grad faculty members have contributed essays and study guides to understanding the Christian faith that may readily be mined from the seminary’s web site or found in the publications of Christian Studies Press.

A few years ago our congregation began to preface each communion service with a “meditation” consisting of a reading from the Bible and associated preparatory thoughts. This practice has been well received and widely commended. But I will admit that the central event in our worship services has been the sermon. Alan McNicol’s recent book, Preparing For the Lord’s Supper, is blessing the congregation I serve by helping us to appreciate the pivotal place that the Lord’s meal should hold in Lord’s Day assemblies.

It is, however, much easier to acknowledge with McNicol that the Lord’s Supper ought to be the climax of a Christian worship service than it is to change our current practice, unconsciously assumed from Protestant tradition, of experiencing the sermon as the central event in worship. For us, one step toward welding knowledge to praxis, toward “preparing for the Lord’s Supper” in a better way, is that on the final Sunday of each month the sermon becomes the communion meditation.

On a recent Sunday, borrowing from McNicol’s conclusion that Mark’s Gospel uniquely emphasizes following Jesus (p.30ff.), our order of worship took that notion as its theme (this order of worship can be viewed at http://www.austingrad.edu/orderofworship.pdf). In the early portion of the service, we heard again Jesus’ call to follow him (Mark 1:14ff.) and I exhorted the congregation to similarly hear and follow Jesus. Previous to communion, the meditation developed McNicol’s suggestion that “Judas is one in a long list of those who will abandon Jesus”(pp.32-33), and thus our time around the table should be a moment of measuring and adjusting our loyalties so that we do not abandon our Lord. And I reminded the congregation that we can be thankful for grace when we do not live up to Sunday’s good intentions on Monday through Saturday.

Though intentionally compact and spare, Preparing for the Lord’s Supper offers a wealth of information that informs our experience around the Lord’s Table. I look forward to digesting it further.

Renée Kennell manages the AGST Bookstore and is ready to assist you with book orders including all titles from AGST’s Christian Studies Press. Visitors are welcome. You may speak to Renée by calling 512.476.2772 or 1-866-AUS-GRAD. E-mail her at rkennell@austingrad.edu.

Visitors entering the Weber Administration Wing at AGST immediately see “Storm Over the Bay” by artist Gene Inman of Georgetown, Texas. Inman graciously permitted the school to make this enlarged reproduction of his original 6x12 oil on canvas painting.
New Place, Same Focus

At the 2007 Sermon Seminar, I made an informal announcement about our plan to relocate the school and why it was necessary. I mentioned our challenge to raise $3 million for the project. Larry Roberts spoke to me after the presentation. Larry is the minister of the Daugherty Street Church of Christ in Eastland, Texas. He is also on the Board of Trustees for Foster’s Home for Children.

“You can raise the money,” Larry said. “It will take a lot of hard work, but it can be done.” He was speaking from his experience of fund raising with Foster’s Home. Going beyond words of encouragement, Larry went home and spoke to his elders and other leaders at the Daugherty Street church about our dream.

Throughout the summer, the Development Office, trustees and campaign committee members prepared for the formal announcement and kickoff of our Building the Dream Capital Campaign. Larry was right. It was hard work. In the fall, through Larry’s introduction, the elders at the Daugherty Street church invited me to make a presentation about the school during Bible class and preach at the Sunday morning worship assembly. Kirk Eason joined me on the trip and participated in the presentation.

The Daugherty Street church made a significant financial contribution to our Building the Dream Capital Campaign. It became just the first of several churches to partner with us in this crucial project. As always, a significant number of individuals came through with pledges and gifts.

I see the success of Building the Dream as an affirmation by God of our mission to educate Christian servants and edify churches. The prayers and support of so many individuals and churches are seen as blessings from God. Without such help from those who partner with us as we seek to better know, understand, practice and pass on the faith, we could not do this good work. For that we are truly thankful.

During the 2008 Seminar, Professor Rick Marrs presented lectures on Genesis 12-50. He gave attention to God’s intent to bring a blessing to all the creation through Abraham and his descendants. Rick mentioned that there is a lot of interest today in receiving blessings. However, he noted that the biblical narrative emphasizes that God’s intent has always been for those who receive a blessing to also be a blessing to others.

That is our stance at Austin Grad. We are humbled and encouraged to be so blessed by God in the success of our campaign. Likewise, we know that “to whom much is given, much is required.” We are glad to be in a better facility, but know this requires much more from us. Yes, we have a new and better place. However, our focus is unchanged. We continue to serve our students and challenge them to grow in the faith in order to be more effective Christian servants.

Our aim, as a school so blessed, is to be a blessing to the church and the world. We thank God for this opportunity to be partners in His kingdom work. In addition, we thank all who join us in this partnership to see the Gospel of Christ do its redemptive work near and far.

A Decade of Great Impressions continued

McNichol, Jeff Peterson, Stan Reid, Mark Shipp, Michael Weed? Doctorates from Vanderbilt, Yale, Perkins, Princeton, Emory...?

What was it like in the ivory tower—once you had parked your car in the miniscule lot below? I found it humane, unaffected, warm and welcoming. I found professors who knew their students’ first and last names, teachers and administrators who genuinely cared about and prayed for their students.

I found a student body that was astoundingly diverse yet intimate. I found classes of twelve and ten and even five. I heard mutually respectful give and take—lofty theology well moored to the day-to-day realities the students would face. I heard students and teachers praying with and for each other.

I found a first-rate theological school that had a heart—though not much of a parking lot. But then—During this last Christmas break, students, faculty and staff gave themselves to the task of moving to a beautiful new campus—More and bigger classrooms, larger and more functional library, even an office for adjuncts. And, AND—I almost lost my car in the spacious new lot! (OK, the slightest exaggeration there.)

Finally, AGST, is housed in a facility more nearly worthy of the excellence and dedication that has typified the school all along. You can pay a lot more, you can drive a lot further, you can work a lot harder to be recognized and appreciated by your teachers and advisors; but you will be hard pressed to come away with a better education ... and a pretty cool T-shirt!
Do you know...

...if your employer has a matching program for charitable gifts?

If not, please ask!

If so, please consider Austin Grad as a worthy recipient!!!

Austin Graduate School of Theology certifies that it is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.