Former Student Recalls Journey To and Through Austin Grad

Editor's note: On Saturday morning October 25, Austin Grad alumnus Frankie Fowler addressed those gathered for the semi-annual Friends' Day. The following is a transcript of her speech.

It was my desire to stand before you this morning with a story that would either bring tears to your eyes or laughter to your mouths. However, as a child of the Most High God, I am obligated to tell the truth—and the truth is my journey to and through the Austin Graduate School of Theology was not an “Amazing Race.”

School disrupted my ordered life and I was not pleased with that. It was not my decision to return to the classroom after a 24-year absence. Like Dr. Weed, I thought my life already had enough “purpose and drive,” so I alternated between blaming God and thanking God for my being here.

I heard about Austin Grad on KIXL AM radio while Bill “The Mailman” Martin played gospel music on Sunday mornings. One Sunday morning, I wrote the number down. I don’t remember how long it took for the idea of attending school to move from a number written on a piece of paper to an idea in my mind. But I do know that even when I began to think it, I didn’t act on it. I didn’t even share it with anyone.

Eventually, it became so strong that it seemed others would hear even if I didn’t speak it, so I spoke it. After I spoke it, I

“I didn’t come to Austin Grad to learn about or to prepare for any new ministries. I came to be better at what I have been doing for a long time in a cozy congregation at a church in the country.”

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Two Volunteer Groups Advance Austin Grad

The Associates for Austin Grad

Cynthia Agnell accepted President Reid’s invitation to chair the first steering committee of the Associates for Austin Grad. The group will oversee, coordinate and assist with events the school hosts. Other members of the steering committee are Jeanette Davis, Ann Hailey, Cindy Lippe, Sarah Lynch, Beverly Martin, Fran Olson and Gwen White.

The purpose of the Associates is to support and cooperate with Austin Grad as it seeks to fulfill its mission through educational, developmental, enrollment and fellowship events. The Associates will host various events throughout the school year enabling staff and faculty to focus on the development of programs to meet the academic and spiritual needs of the students and church community.

Membership is open to any woman interested in serving Austin Grad. There are two levels of membership. The Martha Membership is a participating membership designed for those women who want to actively work on one or more of the annual events. The Mary Membership is a supporting membership available for women who are unable to work at events, but desire to support the Associates and Austin Grad. Annual dues are $50 for a Martha Membership and $200 for a Mary membership.

“A group like the Associates has been needed at Austin Grad for some time,” said President Reid. “We’re thankful to these women for helping us better serve our valued guests when they visit Austin Grad.”

To join the Associates, please e-mail Cynthia at cagnell@austingrad.edu or call the school toll free at 866-287-4723.

The Development and Advisory Council

At its meeting on October 24, the Austin Graduate School of Theology Board of Trustees approved the formation and the constitutional bylaws for a new Development and Advisory Council. Positions on the Council will be by Board of Trustee appointment.

Gary Stork, an Austin Grad alumnus from the class of 1986, was appointed as the first chairman. “The Aus-
AUSTIN GRAD PUBLICATION AIDS IN SPREADING THE GOSPEL NEAR AND FAR

In 1991, a cry came from Christians in Russia for teaching materials written in their language that would introduce the Christian faith. Dr. David Worley, president of Austin Grad, called upon the faculty of Austin Grad to answer that plea.

Faculty members Alan McNicol, Jeff Peterson, Mark Shipp and Michael Weed collaborated and wrote a brief introduction to the Christian faith titled in English, Things That Matter. The book was translated into Russian and 50,000 copies were initially printed and distributed. “Copies were sent to seekers,” said Worley, “who had listened to radio programs broadcast throughout Russia. They wrote to the Russian Bible School office in St. Petersburg requesting Bibles and Christian literature.”

Things That Matter explains the Christian faith and answers questions which are critical to those living in a changing culture. The book has also been printed in French, Croatian, Serbian, Telugu, Hindi and Nepalese. A Spanish translation is also in progress.

Churches in the United States have also recognized the evangelistic appeal of Things That Matter. The Church of Christ at Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee recently sent an advertisement to approximately 40,000 homes in their area. David Anguish, Southwind’s pulpit minister, reports that many requests for the book continue to be received.

Anguish also uses the book as a resource in classes and makes it available in displays at the church building. Church members are encouraged to study the book and pass it along to their friends.

One part of Austin Grad’s mission is to serve churches and support their ministries. We are pleased that publications from Austin Grad’s Christian Studies Press (CSP) are serving churches well and being used around the world to further the cause of the kingdom. Things That Matter and other CSP publications are available from the Austin Grad bookstore. For more information go to www.austgrad.edu and click “Publications.” To order, call Renee at 866-287-4723 or e-mail her at rkennell@austgrad.edu. AG

VOLUNTEERS continued

GARY and PEGGY STORK

taxin Graduate School of Theology,” said Stork, “is no longer the church’s best kept secret, thanks to generations of passionate Christians who give of their time and resources.”

The Council’s purpose is to build mutually beneficial relationships between Austin Grad and those interested in passing on the Christian faith to future generations. Members assist Austin Grad through advocacy, advice, recruitment and philanthropy.

Prospective members will be recommended to the Trustees. Upon approval of the Trustees the prospective members will be appointed to the Council for three year terms.

Members, as individuals or couples, are to donate and also raise a minimum of one-thousand dollars for the school’s annual fund each year. Each member is to attend one semi-annual meeting per year. When asked about the prospects for the Council, Stork said, “I anticipate many joining the swelling ranks who are spreading the word and supporting the school.” AG
Paths to Austin Grad

Austin Grad students travel many different paths on their journey to the school. Some take very direct routes, others more circuitous ones. While the paths may be different, the reasons they arrive at Austin Grad are similar. Our students join us in our quest to better understand the Christian faith so we can better pass on the faith.

Matt Porter is a junior Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and Christian Studies major. After graduating from high school in Sherman, Texas, Matt went to Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas. His love of music led him to pursue a degree in that field. The following summer, Matt served as a youth minister intern for the Park Avenue Church of Christ in Denison, Texas. That experience caused him to consider entering full-time ministry.

Matt spent the next year traveling with a Christian band and praying about his future ministry plans. His father, Keith Porter, a 1986 graduate of Austin Grad, brought Matt to visit the school in the spring of 2008. Matt had heard about the school from his dad and others. Recalling that visit, Matt said, “I discovered the truth of what everyone had told me about Austin Grad. It truly epitomizes ‘faith seeking understanding.’ Sitting in a class and visiting with professors allowed me to see that these teachers do what they do out of deep faith.”

Matt is now serving the Pond Springs Church of Christ in Austin as a youth minister. Concerning Austin Grad, Matt says, “It’s the first time ever that I love coming to school. I actually look forward to class.”

In contrast to Matt’s path, Eliza Bushn’s took a different route to Austin Grad. Originally from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Eliza worked on a college degree for a couple of years and then began pursuing a career. In 1993, her career path led her to Dell Computer Corporation in Austin.

In July of 2008, Eliza initiated retirement discussions with Dell in order to return to college and finish her degree. Because she was a valued employee, Dell made a counter offer of reduced hours. That enabled Eliza to enter Austin Grad’s Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and Christian Studies program. She is now working 32 hours per week at Dell and taking four classes at Austin Grad.

When asked why she wanted to obtain a Bible degree after so many years of working in the technology industry, Eliza said, “I have been teaching the Bible at church for many years, but I want to gain more knowledge so I can teach better.” In the back of her mind was the old adage, “You can’t teach old dogs new tricks.” Nearing the end of her first semester, Eliza said, “I’m amazed how much I am learning!”

Eliza appreciates the diversity of the student body at Austin Grad and thinks this enriches the classroom experience. “The student body diversity,” she says, “helps me understand how varied and big the body of Christ is. We’re not all cookie cutter Christians.” Eliza hopes to continue teaching in her congregation and at special gatherings, possibly some day working full-time in a ministry to women or in the mission field.

James Bennala followed a much different path to Austin Grad. James is from Jamsing Lingapur, India. In India, James raised rice and sugar cane. Most Sundays, he traveled from place to place to preach and teach in various congregations.

James also works with Doulos International (www.doulosinternational.org). Doulos is a Christian ministry that operates an elementary school, four orphanages and a small preaching school. The ministry has great expectations for James as a

— continued on page 5
Ministries Sharing Resources - Austin Grad and Lifeline Chaplaincy

For those serving and supporting ministries, a common sentiment is, “Wouldn’t it be great if ministries could find ways to work together – maximizing resources for the good of the Kingdom?” In support of this goal, Austin Grad and Lifeline Chaplaincy are exploring ways to cooperate and strengthen their efforts.

Lifeline Chaplaincy began in 1983 with the goal of ministering to patients and their families at MD Anderson and other Houston-based hospitals. Lifeline has since served thousands. Its services have grown to include educational resources such as seminars, chaplain internships and publications. In addition, it has opened offices in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and Central Texas.

On the surface, the missions of Austin Grad and Lifeline might seem quite different. However, there are common interests and ties. Both are committed to serving the broader Christian community and dedicated to equipping Christians for service.

Through the years, Austin Grad and Lifeline have held informal ties. Dr. Virgil Fry, Director of Lifeline, has spoken at the school’s annual Sermon Seminar. In addition, Lifeline’s Director of Development, Dr. Carson Stephens, is a past president of the school and continues to be a strong advocate of its mission. Dr. Paul Riddle, B.S. ‘83, is Lifeline’s Director of Spiritual Care in the Houston office.

Lifeline’s move into Central Texas initiated discussions on ways the two ministries might share resources and build upon common goals. On July 1, 2008, Lifeline appointed Tom Nuckels as its Director of Spiritual Care in Central Texas. He serves hospitals in the Austin and Temple/Belton areas. Austin Grad provides office space for Nuckels and other Lifeline personnel. It also provides space for Lifeline training sessions and seminars.

As another step in the cooperative effort, Fry will teach ‘Ministry in Times of Crisis’ at Austin Grad during the spring semester of 2009. While a graduate course, church members are invited to take advantage of the offering as non-degree students or as auditors. For more information, contact Celeste Scarborough, Austin Grad’s registrar, at celeste@austingrad.edu.

Austin Grad and Lifeline have strong ties to churches in central Texas so it is quite common to hear supporters sharing stories of their involvement with each ministry. They have also been quick to express their appreciation to us for exemplifying how two ministries can work together in kingdom service. Lifeline Chaplaincy and Austin Grad appreciate this support and the resources God continues to provide. We ask your prayers to bless these efforts so our Father is glorified.  AG

Paths to Austin Grad continued

Christian leader. Therefore, Doulos chose to sponsor his biblical and theological training in the United States.

“We looked for a place,” said Robert Barkley of Doulos, “where the quality of education is very high, the atmosphere is one of love and helpfulness, and the attitude about things spiritual is one of openness and respect. We found all these things at Austin Grad. The faculty members are well respected for their academic credentials and their church involvement. It is an intimate environment where students are cared for and can grow spiritually. And it has a reasonable cost of attendance without sacrificing quality.”

James is enjoying his time at Austin Grad even though he misses home. He particularly misses his mom’s home cooked rice. He states, “During my first month, the days went by so slowly. Now, as I have gotten more into the semester and met friends, the days are going very fast.”

God works in many different ways to raise leaders for His church. At Austin Grad, we are thankful to have a part in helping prepare individuals from different backgrounds for ministry in the kingdom of God. AG
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THE UPDATE
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This list represents gifts given from
July 2008-September 2008
NEWS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Online Giving Launched.
In an effort to serve Austin Grad donors, the school recently began providing an option for online giving through its website (www.austingrad.edu). Through an arrangement with PayPal, Austin Grad is now able to make safe and convenient online giving available to its supporters.

Since 2005, online donations to non-profits have increased exponentially. Authorities in the field point to convenience and increased security as leading factors in this development. During its first few weeks, donors have given over $5000 in online gifts to the school.

By clicking on the 'Donate Online' button, located on several pages of the Austin Grad website (www.austingrad.edu), supporters of the school will be directed to an informational page. This page describes several ways to support our efforts to equip ministers and other Christians for service in the kingdom of God.

From this page, donors will click on 'Give Now.' This will link the donor to the PayPal website. The donor enters in their one-time donation amount, contact information and credit card information. This can be done without creating a PayPal account. However, donors may set up a monthly donation by creating a PayPal account.

If, at any point, a donor has questions, they may contact Kirk Eason, Director of Development and Public Relations for Austin Grad, by calling him at 866-287-4723.

IRA Charitable Disbursement Benefits Extended.
As part of the bailout plan recently enacted by the U.S. Congress, the IRA charitable disbursement benefits of 2006 – 2007 were extended to 2009. This allows individuals to make charitable gifts from their IRA's. Prior to this, individuals who withdrew funds from retirement accounts paid taxes on the income. Now, one can give directly from their retirement account to a public charity.

There are several important points to remember:
1. The donor must be 70½ years old to make an IRA roll over gift. Such gifts are limited to $100,000 per year. One gift can be made in 2008 and another in 2009.
2. The gift must be from a personal IRA. It cannot be part of a corporate retirement plan.
3. There is no charitable deduction for the gift. It simply reduces a donor's gross income.
4. It must be a direct distribution to a charity from the IRA plan administrator. It cannot go into a planned giving vehicle such as a Charitable Remainder Trust or a Charitable Gift Annuity.

For more information on the benefits of this plan contact your financial advisor.

Annual Fund Campaign

Make a difference in the world today by supporting ministry training at Austin Grad.

Austin Grad’s 2008 – 2009 annual fund campaign is well underway. $420,000 is the goal. The annual fund is one of three revenue streams for the school. Tuition and endowment revenue are the others. It is a vital part of sustaining the school's mission and its ministry to students and churches.

Donors to the annual fund understand the importance of maintaining our quality faculty. They also know how important it is to have scholarships for deserving students who are dedicating their lives to ministry. Most importantly, annual fund supporters are vital partners as we carry out our mission of equipping ministers and other Christians for service.

In addition to the financial goal, Austin Grad hopes to reach a pinnacle of participation from its alumni. The school is attempting to obtain 50% participation from alumni in this year's campaign. This level of commitment from alumni will not only be an expression of appreciation for what they received as students, but will also be a vote of confidence in the school, its faculty and administration.

Above all, your gift to the annual fund will help provide much needed support as the school continues to teach the Bible and prepare Christian servants for ministry in the church and the world. We invite you to make a difference in the world today by supporting ministry training at Austin Grad. You can give online, mail in a check, call in with credit card information or give through your IRA account. AG
HALL NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE LIBRARY

On August 1, Todd Hall (BA, '99; MATS, '01) was named Director of the Library at Austin Grad. “My goal,” Hall said, “is to build on the library’s growth under Dr. Aho.”

Dr. Jon Aho was the previous director and will continue to work with the library through his company, Protos, providing consultation and technical services.

“I’m grateful to Dr. Aho,” says Hall, “for his willingness to help in the transition. He will continue to offer a valuable service to the library in his new relationship.”

Aho took charge of the library in 2002, a week before reaffirmation of accreditation began. According to Dr. Mark Shipp, Aho’s expertise and direction were instrumental in the library’s successful navigation of reaffirmation. Through his oversight, the library entered the TexShare program, improved inter-library loan access, updated available online resources, and expanded print resources considerably.

Hall began working as assistant to the librarian in June of 2006. Soon after this, he entered the Master of Library Science program at the University of North Texas. He graduated in May 2008.

Looking to the future, Hall stresses his debt to past Austin Grad librarians. “I started school at Austin Grad in the fall of ‘98,” said Hall. “It’s been wonderful to see the library grow throughout these ten years. All of the librarians who have been with Austin Grad, Dr. Aho, Wade Osburn and others before my time set a very high standard. They made the library an outstanding resource, and I hope to build wisely on their hard labor.”

Hall’s goals for the library include it becoming a central place for the development of lifelong learners and the building of community. He also wants the library to be a resource for ministers and churches in Austin and the Central Texas area.

Noting his strong ties to Austin Grad, Hall commented, “The school has been a great blessing in my own life. I’m thankful to be a part of God’s work here. It’s my prayer that the library continues to faithfully serve the church.”

Watson Donates Library

Dr. Paul Watson, former faculty member (1979-83) and longtime friend of Austin Grad, donated a substantial portion of his personal library to the school’s David Worley Library. Watson has also spoken at the annual Sermon Seminar and written articles for Christian Studies.

Upon leaving Austin Grad, Watson returned to preaching and pastoral work for the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina. He recently retired and chose Austin Grad to be the recipient of this generous gift.

“This gift from Dr. Watson,” said Todd Hall, Austin Grad’s librarian, “immediately and substantially improves our library. The collection has many important works in theological, bibli- cal and pastoral studies that students and faculty will find invaluable. We’re so grateful to Dr. Watson for this gift which is representative of his lifelong study and service to the church.”
Two New Trustees Added to Board
At its meeting on October 24, the Austin Grad Trustees filled two vacant positions on the Board. John Cummings of Ft. Worth and Dr. Joe Ritchie of Belton were elected to three-years terms. Both are churchmen and bring particular professional experiences that will benefit the Board as it directs the school.

Cummings is an attorney. His father, the late Mike Cummings, and mother, Kaye Cummings Hodges, served on the school’s first Development and Advisory Board. He and his wife, Kory, are members of the Southside Church of Christ in Ft. Worth where he serves as a deacon.

Ritchie is an educator. He held the Homer Newlin Chair, in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University until his retirement in December, 2000. He is now a part-time consultant and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. He and his wife, Ann, are active in the Belton Church of Christ.

Senior Trustee Positions Filled by Charter Members
The Austin Grad Board of Trustees approved an amendment to its Bylaws allowing Senior Trustee positions. Three charter members were elected at the Board Meeting on October 24. They are Bill Millican of Granbury, Texas, Roy Walker of Austin, and Jack Wright of Austin.

Millican was part of the leadership team that initiated the process for the school to begin offering an accredited degree. He served as a trustee from 2003-2007. He and his wife, Jenny, have been some of the school’s greatest advocates for four decades.

Walker served as a trustee from 2003-2008. He and his wife, Doris, continue to be great supporters of the school. They are members of the University Avenue Church of Christ.

Wright has served the school as a volunteer for three decades. He has been vice-president and recently resigned as vice-chancellor to accept the Board’s invitation to be a charter Senior Trustee. Wright serves as an elder at the University Avenue Church of Christ in Austin. He and his wife, Ruth, epitomize the best in volunteerism at Austin Grad.

Senior Trustees are elected for three year terms and are responsible to and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees. They have seat and voice at Board meetings, but no vote.

Former Student Recalls Journey To and Through Austin Grad continued
began to act on it. My first stop was Austin Grad. I called and made an appointment with Beverly. She listened to my story and assured me that Austin Grad could meet my needs. But I didn’t stop there.

I went to other institutions and spoke with other people. I also tried to find people who had attended each of them. But I couldn’t find anyone that I already knew who had attended Austin Grad. However, at the end of my year of searching, I returned to Austin Grad and applied for admission. And the pain began.

Many of my ten-hour workdays flowed into three-hour night classes followed by at least an hour of study before bedtime because Dr. Peterson said I needed to study at least an hour each day to pass Greek. My Mondays off work became Mondays in class, in the library or in the Upper Room. Watching TV, reading for pleasure and long telephone conversations with friends gave way to reading for classes, studying for exams and writing 10 to 12 page papers.

Dr. Aho said I was here to get my own thinking straight and Dr. Boyles said I could begin that process by developing my personal ministry statement. To continue the process, Dr. Fikes had me write an autobiography of my religious heritage. Dr. Beyer said that we should have mercy and kindness for people’s foolishness and I found that I needed to start with myself.

I didn’t come to Austin Grad to learn about or to prepare for any new ministries. I came to be better at what I have been doing for a long time in a cozy congregation at a church in the country. I want to be a better teacher and Dr. Shipp reinforced my conviction to do so when he said that leaders have no right to profane and trivialize what is holy. I hear echoes of the book of James in that statement so I came to Austin Grad to cultivate this gift. I too

Frankie Fowler (MATS ’08) speaks at Friends Day on October 25.
"These are the times that try men’s souls.” With those words, Thomas Paine opened his series of essays titled “The American Crisis.” It became a rallying call to a beleaguered and dispirited Continental Army when the prospects for the Revolution seemed bleak.

Life is always filled with moments that call for faith and action. With recent trends in the financial markets and with the inherent uncertainty of an election year, we live in such a time.

Like most other institutions, Austin Grad faces challenges in times like these, but we are still basking in the success of our recent move to a new building and the positive progress of our Building the Dream Capital Campaign.

Times like these call for wise and faithful leaders. Austin Grad is blessed with a Board of Trustees that is confidently addressing our challenges with wisdom and faithfully trusting God to be with us.

We are thankful for our many friends and partners who continue to believe in our mission and sustain us with their prayers, encouragement and support. On October 19, twenty-four churches prayed for our school and its work during their worship assemblies. We are blessed by these friends and partners.

We are also encouraged by the formation of two new groups of volunteers. The Associates for Austin Grad will provide leadership and support for our special events. The formation of a new Development and Advisory Council (DAC) promises to help our school continue its growth and expansion. Members of the DAC agree to be advocates, advisors and recruiters for the school as well as fulfilling a philanthropic role. These two groups will make important contributions to the quality of our school and its kingdom service.

“These are the times that try men’s souls” were words that became a rallying call during the American Revolution. At Austin Grad, we rally around the promise of our Lord to be with us always to the close of the age.

Throughout its history, Austin Grad has been blessed by friends and partners who joined in its kingdom work in good times and bad. We are encouraged by the memory of those who built the school, we are sustained by the prayers and support of those who now work with us, and we are hopeful for a new generation who will carry this great work forward.

At Austin Grad, we are always mindful of and thankful to God for all who sustain us with their prayers, support and encouragement.

Former Student Recalls Journey To and Through Austin Grad continued

embrace the school’s motto: “To know, understand, practice and pass on the Christian faith.”

My journey through Austin Grad was long and slow, but as all journeys must, it ended in May. Now I can look back and say the gain was worth the pain. What can I say about the Austin Graduate School of Theology? Is it the biggest? Not yet. Is it the best? I don’t know because I don’t know enough about the rest.

But this I do know—it was here when I needed it. The instructors not only challenged me, but they also left me with words of wit and wisdom that continue to propel me to hear and see better so that I may know more. Now that I can read whatever I want to read, what am I reading? Dr. McNicol’s Preparing for the Lord’s Supper. And Dr. Shipp’s Timeless: Ancient Psalms for the Church Today is surely a “must have.”

Since graduating, I’m still teaching in the cozy congregation at the church in the country and I’ve even been invited to teach at some city churches. Max Lucado wrote that “the mark of a disciple is his or her ability to hear the Master’s voice.” I don’t know what the future holds for me, but because of Austin Grad, I am a better disciple. So wherever the voice of God leads me, I will follow.

I was reluctantly obedient to the Spirit when I began attending Austin Grad, but I stayed the course and now I’m so glad that I did. If the true purpose of education is to teach people to think, then I say to the faculty of the Austin Graduate School of Theology, thank you for a job well done! AG
New Course Offered This Spring

Ministry in Times of Crisis

Taught by
Dr. Virgil Fry
Director of Lifeline Chaplaincy

The class will meet four Fridays and Saturdays
January 30-31; March 6-7; April 3-4; June 5-6